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**FEMALE POLITICAL ELITES AS AN EMPOWERMENT RESOURCE:
AN EXPLORATION OF THE 'ROLE MODEL EFFECT' IN SOUTH AFRICA**

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Abstract

The 'Role Model Effect' (RME) broadly postulates that women's presence in male-dominated positions of political power encourages other women to participate in politics. In this study I contribute to the RME scholarship by expanding the analytical scope prevalent in the literature, as I examine the extent to which values, characteristics and behaviours that female university students associate with the term 'female political elite' serve as normative resources when they make important life decisions. Hence, this study analyses how the RME functions by emphasising the lived experiences of female students at the University of Johannesburg in South Africa.

Based on focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews conducted in 2016-2017, I find that most students do not directly consider women in politics as role models. However, students create a connection between themselves and an ideal female political elite through leadership. They construct a set of norms that they expect of female political elites as leaders and as ideal versions of themselves: someone educated, hard-working, active, caring, steadfast, and independent. Many women in politics do not meet these ideal norms. Nevertheless, they contribute to the construction of the ideal type together with a variety of women and men who serve as role models and anti-heroes for the students. These findings suggest that it would be beneficial for women's empowerment and political representation scholars and activists, especially within the western context, to consider more fully people's agency and the construction of the normative ideal. Consequently, this shift in focus highlights the importance of access to relevant information about a variety of women across public and private spheres and people's ability to critically analyse this information. Moreover, it calls for future explorations of context-relevant empowering ideals and constructs.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	3
Table of Contents	4
Acknowledgements.....	7
Acronyms and Abbreviations	8
1 Women in Politics as Role Models: Gender, Power and Representation.....	10
Introduction	10
Features of Women and Political Representation Scholarship	14
Representation and Participation Nexus	21
Research Question and Sub-Questions	25
Structure of the Thesis	29
2 Methodology: Practicing Intersectional Feminist Research.....	31
Introduction	31
Research Site	31
Focus Group Discussions and Semi-Structured Interviews	37
Ethical Considerations.....	42
Participants' Background.....	44
Situated Knowledge: Importance of Decolonisation and #FeesMustFall	47
Reflections on Positionality and Power	52
Writing and Knowledge Production.....	60
Research Limitations	62
3 Contextualising Power in South Africa: Gender, Race, Class and Age ..	66
Introduction	66
Politics of Patronage and Corruption.....	67
The Patriarchal Complacency of the ANC Women's League	71
Toxic Masculinity and Submissive Femininity.....	75
Violence against Women and Black Bodies in HE	79
Youth as Policy-Making Objects	83
Primacy of Experience over Empathy	87
Trust-Building: Cross-Racial Encounters in HE Settings.....	92
Conclusion	97
4 Conceptual Framework: Identity, Difference and Power	99
Introduction	99
Role Model Theorising in Education and Career Development	100
Normative Power of the Elites	103
Identity, Difference and Intersectionality	111
Conclusion	119

5	Exceptional People: Career and Life Journey Role Models	120
	Introduction	120
	Role Models and Career Aspirations	121
	Tenuous Links between Education and Careers	125
	Race and Precarious Life	128
	Higher Education for the Labour Market	132
	The Importance of Relevant Information: Nkosazana, Winnie and Thuli ..	135
	The Impact of the Political System	141
	Conclusion	146
6	Exceptional People: The Elites, Leaders and Middle Classes	148
	Introduction	148
	Eliteness as Power, Wealth and Prestige	149
	Political Elite – Leader Link and Generational Tensions	153
	Eliteness as Being Middle or Working Class	161
	Consumption & Economic Wellbeing	165
	Eliteness and Middle Classness: Wits vs. UJ	171
	Conclusion	179
7	Exceptional People: The Deserving and Hard-Working Achievers.....	181
	Introduction	181
	Who is Deserving? The Impact of Neoliberalism	182
	Deserving Free Higher Education	186
	Struggle and Hard Work: The Undeserving BF Generation	196
	The Implications of Being a Deserving Hard Worker: Entrepreneurs as Role Models	204
	Educated, Competent and Aware	208
	Conclusion	213
8	Exceptional People: Those Who Remember Where They Come from	215
	Introduction	215
	Community and Belonging: Markers of Blackness and Whiteness	216
	Black Culture and Traditional Leadership	221
	Demonstrating Belonging and Remembering: Humility and Language	229
	Remembering as Care	234
	Being Steadfast and Independent	240
	Conclusion	246
9	Conclusion: Empowerment through Constructed Ideals	248
	Key Findings on Role Models, Empowerment and Political Elites	249
	Implications for the RME Theorising	252
	De-homogenizing Youth in Times of Fallism	254
	Implications for Future Research and Feminist Advocacy	255

Bibliography	262
Appendix.....	312
Short Biographies of Select Student Participants	312
Focus Group Discussions Schedule and Questions	326
Interview Schedule and Questions.....	329

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
ANC WL	African National Congress Women's League
ANC YL	African National Congress Youth League
APK	Auckland Park, Kingsway Road Campus, University of Johannesburg
AU	African Union
BBBEE	Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
BF	Born-Free
BIG	Basic Income Grant
BMC	Black Middle Class
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CBD	Central Business District
COPE	Congress of the People
COSATU	Confederation of South African Trade Unions
CPS	Cash Paymaster Services
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DA	Democratic Alliance
DASO	Democratic Alliance Student Organisation
DFC	Doornfontein Campus, University of Johannesburg
EFF	Economic Freedom Fighters
EFF SC	Economic Freedom Fighters Student Command
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FMF	#FeesMustFall
FPE	Female Political Elite
GBP	Great British Pound Sterling
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HE	Higher Education
HWU	Historically White Universities
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
MC	Middle Class
MP	Member of Parliament
NDZ	Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma
NEC	National Executive Committee
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NGK	Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (Afrikaans for Dutch Reformist Church)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NP	National Party
NRF	National Research Foundation
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
NWC	National Women's Coalition
PO	Participant Observation
PR	Proportional Representation
RAU	Rand Afrikaans University
RM	Role Model

RME	Role Model Effect
RMF	#RhodesMustFall
SACP	South African Communist Party
SAPS	South African Police Service
SASCO	South African Students Congress
SASSA	South African Social Security Agency
SOE	State Owned Enterprise
SONA	State of the Nation Address
SRC	Student Representative Council
SS	“Studente Sentrum” (Afrikaans for Student Centre), Auckland Park, Kingsway Road Campus, University of Johannesburg
SSI	Semi-Structured Interview
SWC	Soweto Campus, University of Johannesburg
UCT	University of Cape Town
UJ	University of Johannesburg
UNISA	University of South Africa
VC	Vice-Chancellor
VP	Vice-President
WC	Western Cape
Wits	University of Witwatersrand
ZAR	South African Rand

1 Women in Politics as Role Models: Gender, Power and Representation

Introduction

Who would you like to be when you grow up? This is one of the questions that comes to mind when we think about role models. A role model (RM) is your mind's vision of someone who has those special qualities you have a reason to value, when the question gets asked; someone whose career or whose life represents the ideals that you think are possible for you. When Pearl, one of my key informants, was growing up in an Indian/Asian township in the province of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) in South Africa, she was confident that it would be possible for her to leave her township and become successful. Pearl was an Indian South African, and when we met in May 2017, she was working as a youth activist and co-directing a non-governmental organisation (NGO). She was a recent graduate from one of the leading universities in South Africa and had a student-activist past, being a member of a political organisation on campus. She believed it was her home environment that had enabled her to think of herself as exceptional. Surrounded by books and television, and going to a white church, where she saw people "who had made it in life," she was in an environment unlike many of her township peers. With high cadence and passion in her speech, she said:

And that's the thing. You shouldn't have to be exceptional to do well... And I think that's one of the only reasons why I managed to get out [of the township], because I always thought that I was exceptional. And so I was like: 'well, *obviously* I'm gonna get out, coz I'm great'. And that's what it takes. You have to be exceptional.

Pearl's statement goes to the heart of the expected impact of role models. As individuals who are seen to be exceptional and stand out from the crowd, they inspire others with their behaviours and characteristics. It is their qualities, demonstrated in their journeys towards a desirable status, goal or outcomes, whatever they may be, that make them into role models for others with similar desires and positions in life. The extent to which women in politics serve as role models to young South African women at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) is

the focus of this thesis, which questions if norms that students associate with these women serve as an empowering resource in their decision-making.

According to some feminist scholarship on gender and politics, there is evidence which suggests that women in politics are role models to other women based on their shared experiences within patriarchal¹ societies (Evans, 2016a; Krook and Schwindt-Bayer, 2013; Morgan and Buice, 2013; Wolbrecht and Campbell, 2007). Their successful entry into male-dominated offices and positions of power challenges established gender norms, which cast leadership as a male trait, and which have naturalised politics as men's domain, while relegating women to the privacy of the home. Women's presence in these political positions represents a different social order and helps other women to envision a reality that differs from what socialisation taught them to be possible for 'someone like them'. The 'role model effect' (RME), then, denotes the observation that women become encouraged to engage in politics in various ways and to challenge the patriarchal social order when they see other women in politics.

Over the last few decades, women have become a considerable presence in formal politics and in the public sphere more broadly in many countries. South Africa, for instance, has had some of the world's highest percentages of female parliamentarians and cabinet members (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2017, 2015, 2014). The increased numerical representation of women in politics since the 1990s in South Africa would suggest that women have become better entrenched amongst most political echelons. This in turn demonstrates the rise of gender norms, which do not associate political leadership and power with men only. Women's formal inclusion in the democratic political institutions in the country arises from a long history of women's engagement in the struggle against the racist, patriarchal political system of apartheid and its colonial predecessors, as well as from the experiences of women's pre-colonial political power in many parts of the Southern African region.

¹ Patriarchy can be understood as structures and systems privileging masculinities and undermining the feminine (Enloe, 2004).

In late 2016, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma (NDZ), a veteran of the anti-apartheid struggle, a former cabinet minister and Chairwoman of the African Union (AU), became the front-runner for the position of the president of South Africa's ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC). Her victory would have symbolically solidified the changes of gender norms in the realm of political representation and many hoped that having a Black African woman president would also expand the aspirational horizons of young women and girls in the country. In the end, NDZ lost the presidential race in December 2017 by a relatively small margin, which sparked a series of analyses as to why she was not elected.² These debates highlighted the complexity of her candidature and brought to the fore the various axes of power shaping South African society. It highlighted once again that women's presence in South African politics is accompanied by sexist rhetoric, misogynistic violence, and everyday practices of marginalization and exclusion, suggesting women's continued outsider status in the public sphere. It also showed the deeply felt and lived concerns, frustrations, and disenchantments with the politics of corruption and patronage of the ruling classes, the powerful, the elite, whose wealth and privilege stand in stark contrast to the poverty of the majority (Alejo Vázquez Pimentel, Macías Aymar, and Lawson, 2018). Women in South African politics thus experience and represent a complex and contradictory set of norms, which begs the question, whether they are deemed as empowering role models to other women in the country or their exceptionalism as elites creates a sense of difference that prevents them from contributing to the empowerment of other women.

The example of NDZ's bid for the presidency has clearly shown that women in politics need to be understood as much more than bearers of a particular

² NDZ's loss was analysed through a gendered lens not least because her candidature was supported by the ANC Women's League (WL), which drove the debate about the importance of the first female president. At the same time, her commitment to gender parity and her track record on promoting women's empowerment had been scrutinised during the campaign, as was her link to her former husband, the sitting president Jacob Zuma. Her opponents depicted her potential presidency as a continuation of his politics of corruption, as I discuss more in Chapter Five, and her loss was partially caused by the switch of allegiance of a voting block headed by David Mabuza, who moved away from the Jacob Zuma faction. Lastly, NDZ's loss was accompanied by the reduction of the number of women in the top six ANC positions. These developments were jointly marked as a decline of gender equality within the ANC and demonstrate the systems of power that surround women in South African politics (Morojole, 2018; Bendile, 2017; Gerber, 2017).

(gender) identity or proponents of a set of political beliefs and objectives. However, much of the early, foundational scholarship on the RME from North American and European academics has insufficiently recognised these complexities of women's lived experiences. Hence, one of its weaknesses is an insufficient analysis of the workings of power and their impact on the mechanism through which women as role models may help empower other women in a given society (Celis and Lovenduski, 2018). My research seeks to build on this critical scholarship of the RME, by shifting the analytical focus on women's lives and experiences and combining them with an examination of their views and perceptions of women in positions of political power. Hence, this research interweaves the stories of women in politics with stories and experiences of female citizens: South African university students, their families, friends and other women in their lives and in the public domain. It shows all these women as both subjects and objects of power and focuses on the messiness of power, identity, and representation across the public and private spheres. Thus, it strives to improve our understanding of the RME mechanism within the broader decolonial feminist-inspired objective of empowering the oppressed and achieving social justice.

Based on the insights from UJ students, I argue that many women in politics fail to be seen as empowering role models to young women. Their counter-stereotypical presence in politics is not sufficient to meet the expectations that young women construct of an ideal woman in politics, or what I refer to in the thesis as a 'female political elite' (FPE). Together with other women and men, who are role models and anti-heroes for young women, women in politics are, however, important contributing elements in the construction process of the norms that students attach to the FPE ideal, which I find to be the ideal version of the student herself. It is this ideal and the meaning that the students want women in politics to symbolise that serves as an empowering resource for the students instead of the individual women in politics. Consequently, I propose that the agency of students in the processes of construction of social norms deserve a more prominent role in future feminist research and activism, as it has largely been neglected in the theorizing and researching of the empowering

potential of women in politics as role models. In addition to these implications for the RME theorising, research and activism, the analysis of the RME in this thesis serves as a lens through which to understand how women at university understand, critique, and engage with politics in South Africa. Thus, this research also contributes to a better understanding of the South African social order.

The remainder of this introductory chapter provides the details of the theories and debates on women's political representation and the RME in particular, explaining the aforementioned weaknesses in the literature. After presenting and justifying the research question and sub-questions, the chapter concludes by outlining the thesis' structure.

Features of Women and Political Representation Scholarship

Research on women in politics as potential role models has conventionally been situated within the literature on symbolic representation. The conceptual premises of this scholarship stem from the work of Hanna Pitkin (1972), who articulates symbolic representation as one of four types of representation. Pitkin understands representation as a process by which an agent stands for a principal. While formal representation denotes the rules and procedures regulating the delegation of the authority to act, descriptive representation means 'standing for' someone through a connection, a resemblance or likeness (1972, 61); substantive representation means 'acting for' others or making represented people "present in the action rather than in the characteristics of the actor" (1972, 144). Symbolic representation then denotes making the principal present through symbols, be it objects or people in a way that a flag symbolises the nation (1972, 92). Hence, symbolic representation differs from the descriptive form because it evokes certain meanings for the person who perceives it and thus symbols do not necessarily have to have any descriptive resemblance to what or whom they represent. Pitkin prioritises active forms of representation over symbolic, because of the emphasis on accountable relationship, which is particularly important for democratic citizenship, which is the context in which she works (Childs and Lovenduski, 2013).

Feminist and gender scholars, amongst others, have substantially expanded Pitkin's theorization of representation since the 1970s; however, it is still important to recognise that RME scholarship originates from Pitkin's work, because her undervaluing of symbolic representation has led to a reluctance to engage with it in subsequent scholarship, pushing it to the margins of the discipline. As Jane Mansbridge, another representation scholar summarises, "In political contexts the word 'symbol' often bears the unspoken modifier 'mere'. Moreover, symbols are often perceived as being 'only' in people's heads rather than 'real'" (1999, 652). Thus, while mainstream political science scholarship had been dismissive of symbolic representation, as it is about evoking beliefs, norms and more generally about creating social meaning, its importance for feminist scholars had become increasingly recognised.

In the early feminist scholarship carried out from the standpoint of North American and European academia, the role model function of women in politics was understood as a mechanism by which women's presence in political offices symbolised that women are capable and fit to rule (Mansbridge, 1999, 650). As such, the RME is understood to counteract socialisation processes which instil gender norms keeping women out of decision-making and the public sphere to various degrees, and perpetuating leadership and political acumen as masculine traits. Gender norms can be understood as widely held sets of expectations within a particular spatial and temporal context, of how men and women should behave in order to be perceived as intelligible and be accepted by their communities. Gender norms which are set in binaries of male/female and thus are tied to biological sex, took on their current configuration as a result of capitalist forms of economic production and spread through colonialism and imperialism from Europe to other regions, including South Africa. Through colonialism and the accompanying missionary activities, gender norms were imposed, and either replaced or transformed local sets of norms, which in many instances did not feature differentiated expectations for men and women in sex-based binary forms (Mendoza, 2016; Lugones, 2008; Oyèwùmí, 2002). These gender norms, which result in disproportionately lower presence of women in leadership positions, are manifested in various ways. For example, they lead to

women's lack of self-confidence or their perception that in comparison to men with equal credentials they are less qualified for office (Fox and Lawless, 2011). Hence, when considering political office, women fight internalised norms and expectations that they belong to the privacy of the home as mothers and carers rather than to the public sphere (Gouws and Hassim, 2014; Bauer and Britton, 2006; Sadie, 2005).

Against this backdrop, the RM theory postulates that by virtue of a shared gendered experience, female politicians become role models and help other women overcome this "internalized sexism" (Broockman, 2014, 3). They foster an "emancipative belief" that "emphasizes the equal empowerment of all people to freely actualize their potentials, irrespective of group differences, including those of sex" (Alexander and Welzel, 2011, 369). Consequently, with the rise in the numbers of female politicians, positive changes emerge to the supply of female candidates as well as the demand for female decision makers and leaders from both men and women alike. Studies suggest that if women are seen as competent problem solvers, they can come to be seen as leaders over time (Evans, 2016a; Beaman et al., 2012), but the impact behind the novelty of their presence can also diminish after several electoral cycles as they become part of the establishment (Gilardi, 2015). In situations of social discontent, for example, support for women's political engagement increases if women are perceived as alternatives or outsiders to the establishment (Morgan and Buice, 2013).

Gender norms which negatively affect women's ability to enter and successfully perform in the public sphere are embedded in institutional culture and practices within political organisations. Thus, in addition to the aforementioned internalised norms, there are also external norms and expectations that push women out of the public sphere and politics in particular (Piscopo, 2018). The well-documented experiences of African female parliamentarians (Gouws and Hassim, 2014; Burnet, 2011; Devlin and Elgie, 2008; Tripp, 2001; Tamale, 2000) reveal these practices that are both formal and informal. One example is the propensity of political parties to avoid or undermine the implementation of practices that would promote women in the institutional hierarchy. This can be

seen in fielding female candidates in spots where they are unelectable (Tadros, 2015). Consequently, a proportional representation (PR) electoral system with closed party lists, which is also used in South Africa, is positively associated with women's successful entry into office, especially when accompanied with official, national quota systems and sanctions, because they address these institutional party practices (Murray, 2018; Krook and Norris, 2014; Tinker, 2004). Additionally, leftist parties also seem to provide more opportunities for women, at least as far as numerical representation is concerned, although the opportunities to exercise substantive, political power remains questionable (Krook and Schwindt-Bayer, 2013; Bauer, 2012, 2011; Bauer and Britton, 2006; Lindberg, 2004).

Internal operational party rules and practices also impede women's political performance and ability to move up the party ladder. These obstacles are especially cumbersome for women who choose to or have to combine their political careers with other roles and responsibilities, such as providing the unpaid care for their households and families. Ranging from meeting times at late hours of the night to insufficient physical infrastructure, parties fail to change their *modus operandi*, which has been set up to suit the privileged, but does not accommodate most female politicians. In this regard, parties mirror and co-construct practices in other political institutions and create a context which communicates that women do not belong in the public realm (Kittilson, 2013; Tiessen, 2008; Ross, 2002).

The formally exclusionary environment is exacerbated by informal practices perpetuated by the so-called 'Old-Boys Club' mentality. Male politicians have been shown in various degrees to question women's presence within the party structures, their ability to lead and perform on an 'equal' footing as they see it, and some even actively undermine women's political careers and performance. Experiences of sexual harassment, amongst other forms of physical and psychological violence are probably the most notorious manifestations of this sexism and misogyny, which, however, are often hidden in public debates. Hence, formal and informal factors converge to create and maintain patriarchal political

institutions, such as political parties and parliaments, resulting in the dearth of women in leadership positions (Ahikire, Musiimenta and Ashaba Mwiin, 2015; Tripp, 2006; Sadie, 2005).

The successes of women such as Helen Zille, Premier of the Western Cape (WC) Province and the former leader for eight years of the South Africa's main opposition party, the Democratic Alliance (DA), demonstrate women's ability to rise within party structures; yet, their achievements do not negate the overarching patriarchal nature of the system. On the contrary, they frequently show that women have to work extraordinarily hard to 'prove' themselves and overcome the gender-based barriers, suggesting that they perform much better than the majority of the men against whom they compete (Besley et al., 2017). Moreover, some of these women's careers demonstrate that their success is dependent on their adoption of characteristics and behaviours that either resonate with the masculine nature of politics, or at least do not challenge the core underpinnings of the patriarchal structures. In some instances, female politicians achieve this by acting in line with the dominant forms of masculinity in the given political context. Others perform iterations of femininity that are acceptable to the patriarchal gaze perpetuated by both men and women (Gqola, 2015; Laher 2014). I return to some of these issues in Chapters Three and Eight, as I explore them in South Africa specifically, using the case study of the ruling ANC.

The RME theories are thus founded on the notion that FPEs symbolise a challenge to prevalent gender norms and hence RME can be re-articulated as a process whereby norms that FPEs represent serve as normative resources for the empowerment of others. Naila Kabeer defines empowerment as "processes of change through which those who have been denied the capacity to exercise choice gain this capacity" (2012, 217). In Kabeer's conceptualisation, power is an "ability to make choices", which suggests the existence and one's awareness of meaningful alternatives. The choices that Kabeer engages with are in matters of "strategic importance", such as whether to get married or get employed, as decisions of everyday nature, such as what to cook for dinner, might not

necessarily challenge gender norms and power hierarchies (Kabeer, 1999, 2). One's ability to exercise power (agency) is influenced by various inputs, including social norms, which can either inhibit or enable one's agency (Kabeer, 1999, 3). However, presence of and access to resources does not necessarily mean control over them and therefore, resources do not automatically lead to improved agency (Malhotra and Schuler, 2005; Mason, 2005; Kabeer, 1999). Thus, empowerment cannot be done *for* disempowered women and men, but it is a process of change that they undergo.

Enhancing one's 'power within' – an ability to overcome internalised gender norms which inhibit one's agency – is the key idea behind both women's empowerment and the RM theories. Empowerment scholars such as Cornwall (2014), Kabeer (2012), Eyben and Napier-Moore (2009) and Wilson (2009) also highlight however, the importance of stimulating a collective 'power-with'. It is through women's coming together in solidarity and discussion that the impetus to demand societal transformation arises, because it creates critical distance from one's internalised subjectivities. Collective action is thus crucial to achieve structural and systematic change and to resist power, domination and exploitation (McGee, 2016). As Srilatha Batliwala (2007) points out, based on this conceptualisation, empowerment in the 20th century was primarily a political feminist project of personal *and* social transformation. Through the mainstreaming and large uptake of empowerment discourses, however, empowerment has been depoliticised and lost its focus on power and radical social transformation in favour of individualised economic change (Cornwall, 2014; Batliwala, 2007). Hence, individualistic or 'liberating' empowerment, unlike collective, works alongside the neoliberal economic paradigm that dominates development policy and practice, and which renders empowerment into an instrument for incorporating women as entrepreneurs into the local and global economy (Cornwall and Edwards, 2014). While Batliwala (2007) questions whether empowerment should be abandoned for a new concept in light of its current political impotence to challenge power structures, the theories and empirical scholarship rather than policy and state practice are useful for the

study of FPEs as role models and the norms attached to them as empowerment resources.

Despite empowerment's usefulness for the RM scholarship, most political science scholars who work on the RME and who are situated within North American and European academia, have not been engaging with power and empowerment in a meaningful manner, being focused primarily on the issue of representation and participation within the liberal democratic theorising, which I explore in the following section. Alexander (2012), Alexander and Welzel (2011) and Zetterberg (2009), for example, evoke empowerment, but they do not extend the theoretical debates and do not analyse power of the norm that lies at the core of the RME mechanism. The notable exceptions are the edited volume by Alexander, Bolzendahl and Jalalzai (2018), who identify these disciplinary silos and seek to use the empowerment literature from development studies to explore and theorise the concept of women's political empowerment on a global scale. Second, is the work by Lombardo and Meier (2014, 172), who demonstrate the usefulness of symbolic representation for the understanding of power through informal, unspoken cultural norms; however, they do not examine if and how individual women as role models can help empower other women. In contrast to the aforementioned scholars, many gender and development scholars engaging with political empowerment have focused on the issue of power in a much more targeted manner. Mariz Tadros (2015, 68) for example cautions about the propensity to equate women's political representation with empowerment, highlighting the eliteness and various forms of privilege that facilitate entry into politics for women and men, leaving out voices of those whose are marginalised by their age or ethnicity amongst other identities and structures of power.

In the following section I elaborate on the weaknesses of the RM scholarship regarding the focus on specific forms of political representation and participation which emerges out of the critical scholarship of many African feminists.

Representation and Participation Nexus

Due to the intellectual and disciplinary origins of the RM scholarship in political sciences in the global North, scholars have focused on analysing the impact of women's representation as a means to encourage women's political efficacy, interest and participation against the standards of liberal democracies. This scholarship claims that gender norms associated with politics, which can be understood as "processes, philosophies, behaviors, and systems of organization that relate to state governance" (Hill Collins and Chepp, 2013, 73) contribute to women's unequal participation, despite equal citizenship rights (Siim, 2013; Cornwall, Robins and Von Lieres, 2011; Lister, 2003; Phillips, 1991; Connell, 1990; Fraser 1990). Participation, or in other words access and inclusion in formal politics, have consequently become the main response of many gender equality programmes and policies. Tied to the aforementioned 'principal-agent' based theorizations of representation, female elected office holders dominated the RM scholarship until the early 2000s. Most studies have been focusing on national or provincial/state level members of parliaments (MPs), but over the last decade women in the executive have been increasingly included in the pool of 'women in politics' that are analysed (Jalalzai and dos Santos, 2015; Jalalzai and Alexander, 2014).

This focus, which I refer to as the 'political representation-participation nexus', is however, not suitable to grasp a broader understanding of politics in the context of the global South, nor is it suitable in a context of crisis of parliamentarianism and liberal democracy (Tadros 2015), where spaces for formal political representation and participation become the domains of the elites and the privileged, both women and men. As institutional and formal political processes do not provide sufficient voice and opportunities for the marginalised women and men, especially between infrequent moments of electoral participation, disillusioned and discontented groups look for alternatives that are closer to their everyday realities (Dawson, 2014b; Cornwall, Robins and von Lieres, 2011; Marien, Hooghe and Quintelier, 2010). Women's movements and civil society in particular have offered an accessible, direct alternative to formal politics, and

when they were autonomous, they led to many important constitutional and legislative changes towards gender equality on the continent (Bridger 2018; Hughes and Tripp, 2015; Bauer and Burnet, 2013; Weldon, 2011; Waylen, 2008). In many countries, the line between the state and civil society as two separate sites of representation is blurred, as many women move between positions within the state and civil society organisations (CSOs), where they build leadership skills and platforms to enter formal politics (Cornwall, Robins and Von Lieres, 2011; Hassim, 2006b; Burns, Schlozman and Verba, 2001).

For many South African women for example, burial societies, prayer circles and savings groups, the so-called *stokvels*, offered important spaces for socializing and political conscientisation during apartheid when other forms of participation and engagement were not available (Shange, 2017; Willoughby-Herard, 2014; Stevenson, 2011). The history of anti-colonial liberation struggles across the continent shows that women also engaged in violent, armed struggles as a means of their political participation. Moreover, ethnic kingdoms and chiefdoms, which are not part of the Eurocentric RM scholarship repertoire, are under-researched as sites of political representation for African women, often under the false colonial homogenising understanding of African societies being patriarchal and misogynist, and hence automatically unable to provide women access to political power (M'Cormack-Hale, 2015; Cornwall, Robins and Von Lieres, 2011; Comaroff and Comaroff, 2003). Achille Mbembe highlights the particular importance of these unconventional engagements in post-colonial contexts, where the domination is complemented with conviviality and thus "the analyst must watch out for the myriad ways in which ordinary people guide, deceive and actually toy with power instead of confronting it directly" (1992, 25).

Many African feminists highlight the tradition of the so-called naked protests whereby, through exposing their breasts or buttocks in public, African women shame other members of their communities, especially men, and expose the violence against their bodies, while highlighting their life-giving power (Andrade, 2002). Feminist activists continue to build on this tradition, with primary examples including women who were members of the Fallist student protests in

South Africa, who staged several naked or nude protests, be it in response to police and security brutality or against rape and other forms of violence against their bodies (Ndlovu, 2017; Gouws, 2016a; Miller 2016). The centrality of the body in African feminisms (Bennett, 2011; Nnaemeka, 2004) arises against the colonial racist hyper-sexualisation, control and abuse of African women, most iconically manifested in the treatment of Sara Baartman who “was taken from South Africa to Europe to be paraded as a freak on account of her protruding buttocks and elongated labia” (Vincent 2016, 7). Similarly, Pumla Gqola (2015) highlights the metaphor of the colonial rape of land on the continent being tied to the rape of women’s bodies, which consequently transforms the sites and forms of women’s participation in politics in a post-colonial, patriarchal racist society and the centrality of women’s bodies in these efforts.

Non-formal means of participation are also of importance in South Africa and globally for the youth as new technologies and social media become more prominent (Coffé and Campbell, 2017; Lewis, Tigist and van Vuuren, 2013; Honwana, 2012; Dalton, 2008; Diouf, 2003) and for African feminists in particular (Nyambura 2018; Bennett, 2011). Scholars have also shown, for example, how music and youth culture have had a considerable political influence, which is often disregarded in the consideration of political activism. The South African genre of Kwaito, which evolved in particular in the 1990s as a cultural expression of the Black African youth, played a significant role in helping to shape the idea of South African belonging and identity and had profound political implications, despite being seen as apolitical (Steingo, 2017; Honwana, 2012). The Gender and Cultural Citizenship Working Group captures this need as:

looking for politics and issues of power and inequality in arenas normally considered to be outside of the domain of citizenship, for example, issues of spirituality, emotion, family and kinship, sexuality and intimate relations, and domestic and sexual violence (2009, 7).

Hence, although there is a danger of widening the definition of politics to the extent that it becomes devoid of meaning and practically useless (Hooghe, 2014), the term needs to be open to new insights and to be made contextually

appropriate. Oinas, Onodera and Suurpää (2017) use the term ‘political engagement’ as a means to challenge the narrow approach of traditional political participation vocabulary in their work on politics, and to expand the horizons of the possible interpretations of forms and styles of politics, which I use throughout the thesis.

The aforementioned recognition of the role of movements in representing ‘women’s interests’, if indeed one can argue that there are such collective interests, is tied up with scholarship on women’s substantive representation and the constructivist turn, which challenges the assumption of the democratic theory that representation is purely a bottom-up process starting with citizens (Celis and Mügge, 2017; Warren, 2017). Various studies demonstrate the opposite directionality of representation, with politicians and political institutions affecting their constituents’ views, opinions, and behaviour (Broockman and Butler, 2017; Bullock, 2011; McDonagh, 2009). Morgan and Buice (2013), for example, find that men and individuals connected to political parties are more likely to take cues from political elites and shift their views on women in politics according to these cues. Hence, representatives not only respond to the citizens, but also shape them and construct a certain image of who they are.

The reversed directionality between the representative agents and principals has been theorised by Michael Saward (2006) through the notion of ‘representative claim making’. He argues that “representation is not a mere fact that ‘just is,’ so representations (depictions, portrayals, encapsulations) of self and others in politics do not just happen. People construct them, put them forward, make claims for them – *make* them [original emphasis]” (2006, 301). Emanuela Lombardo and Petra Meier (2017, 2014) expand Saward’s theory by focusing on the construction of gender in politics and do so particularly by utilizing discourse analysis. They demonstrate that by representing women and men in gendered ways, representatives (not only elected office holders) construct gender norms, which in turn serve to perpetuate social identity, political legitimacy and control. Thus, they show that symbols do not only ‘stand for’ the principal as Pitkin

(1972) postulates. The authors further highlight that evocations of gender become subject to interpretation by individual citizens, meaning that the citizens' positioning affects their interpretations of their symbolic representations. Similarly, Shirin Rai (2017, 2015) shows that rituals and ceremonies in political institutions can be approached and analysed as performances towards citizens and other audiences. These performances are judged on their authenticity amongst other elements and are subsequently met with various responses from the audience, ranging from their acceptance to rejection and resistance.

The examination of the RME within the representation-participation nexus and the weaknesses that arise from it against the post-colonial African context, are partially facilitated by the disciplinary preference of political scientists to use quantitative methods, which by default require a simplification of complex gender socializing processes (Childs and Lovenduski, 2013, 491; Franceschet, Krook and Piscopo, 2012, 234). It should, therefore, not come as a surprise that the RME literature has produced inconclusive results, depending on the research design. Correlations between women's political representation and various forms of political participation have been established and are further supported by anecdotal, qualitative evidence, which suggests that FPEs are symbols, role models and a resource for some women. This justifies the need for a qualitative study that would address the methodological and theoretical weaknesses and provide new insights into the RME mechanism.

Research Question and Sub-Questions

Building on the above outlined literature and theorising of the RME, this study asks: *To what extent do female university students in present day South Africa consider values, characteristics and behaviours represented by female political elites, when they make decisions they deem important to their lives?* In particular, the research strives to understand:

- 1) What are the key decisions that the students have made so far?
 - a. How were these decisions made?

- b. Who were the key individuals involved?
 - c. How is the South African context, including gender norms, shaping these decisions?
- 2) Who are female political elites according to the students?
 - a. How do the students understand eliteness?³
 - b. How do their perceptions of eliteness change with the compounded understanding of politics and gender norms?
- 3) What are the values, characteristics and behaviours that they expect of female political elites?
 - a. Are these expectations met by the particular individuals they consider to be female political elites?

The formulation of the research question and sub-questions addresses the limitation of the binary focus on the representation-participation nexus within an equally limited notion of what is considered ‘political action’ as tied to liberal democracies. Firstly, by using the term ‘female political elite’ rather than a pre-selected, particular group of women in politics, the research allows participants to interpret the notions of ‘politics’ and to select the women who they see as relevant. Secondly, the research question extends the scope of analysis beyond political participation by examining decision-making processes of research participants, based on the aforementioned women’s empowerment literature on decision-making as an indication of agency. Formulating the research question in this manner avoids presumptions about the spheres of life in which the RME induced ‘emancipative belief’ as Alexander and Welzel (2011) put it, can be experienced and perceived. Thirdly, the question embraces the intersecting nature of gender with other forms of power and inequality by focusing on undefined, undetermined values, characteristics and behaviours associated with

³ I use the term eliteness throughout the thesis separately from elitism, which Merriam-Webster dictionary defines as “leadership or rule by an elite”; “the selectivity of the elite; *especially* snobbery” or “consciousness of being or belonging to an elite” (Elitism, 2018). Eliteness in distinction is meant to designate the norms attached to individuals or institutions who are understood to be elite, or in other words, to capture what it means to be elite and to perform being elite, which might not automatically involve selectivity. Some literature, for example Thurlow and Jaworski (2017a, 2017b), use the terms eliteness and elitism interchangeably. However, in order to highlight that elitism as snobbery may or may not be part of being elite, and that there is a broader scope of understanding what it means to be elite, I use the terms distinctively.

the term FPE. Consequently, my study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of the RME mechanisms and of the impact of women in politics as complex individuals, situated within intersecting systems of power and hence amongst broader set of actors who shape people's lives realities. Ultimately, I strive to distil if and how the delivery of the emancipative potential of the RME may be achieved and thus how it fits within a broader spectrum of feminist strategies to promote social justice and tackle gender inequality.

South Africa offers a very productive context for the explorations of the RME mechanism due to the aforementioned paradoxes and controversies, which put female politicians in a complex position as both power holders and the disempowered, be it vis-à-vis their male peers or fellow citizens. As I have mentioned earlier, women continued to maintain substantial presence in South African national and provincial politics in 2016 – 2017, despite a declining trend in numerical representation since the first post-apartheid government which came into power following the first multi-racial, democratic elections in 1994. Since the early 1990s, women have also held some of the highest positions within the South African Police Service (SAPS), South African Defence Force, the judiciary and the diplomatic corps. According to the Elections Commission (2014, 50), in 2013 only a third of South Africans believed that men were better leaders than women, and 46% believed that their interests would be better represented if there were more women in politics. Both of these public opinion polls marked a rising, pro-women trend since 2010, suggesting that patriarchal gender norms keeping women outside of the public sphere may be changing. Support for women in top leadership positions is, however, not an automatic, progressively strengthening phenomenon. As practices connected to gender norms are subject to change, many aforementioned feminist authors warn that regressions and loss of gained grounds are not uncommon. Thus, challenges and acceptances of gender norms in their intersections with other systems of power need to be seen within the long-term political and socio-economic trajectories in South Africa, which include the growing divide between the wealthy and the poor (Alejo Vázquez Pimentel, Macías Aymar, and Lawson, 2018).

The focus of this study on young female university students is based on several key factors relating to their age as well as their position within higher education (HE). Firstly, young people are often target beneficiaries of role model-based programmes, policies, and other interventions, due to the ongoing process of socialisation and identification/identity formation (Wolbrecht and Campbell, 2017; Beaman et al., 2012). These interventions use role models to induce change and impact the youth's views, beliefs and/or behaviour (MacCallum and Beltman, 2002). While socialisation and identification processes do not stop in later ages and therefore role models remain of importance for adults (Brown and Treviño, 2014), the role model and socialisation-based interventions tend to focus on younger-generations and age cohorts. As young university students are at the stage of their life when they are making important decisions which influence their life trajectories, for example about their education, career, marriage, or parenthood (Bosch, 2013; Malila et al., 2013), using the theorisation of empowerment becomes particularly helpful for the analysis of the potential impact of FPEs. Hence, focusing on this cohort enables the research to feed into and engage with youth-based policies and programmes.

Secondly, as I will demonstrate throughout the thesis, young women's voices in the patriarchal and gerontocratic social context such as South Africa have been invisible and neglected due to the power structures that render them unimportant. Hence, young women, especially those marginalised by their race and economic status, have both some of the greatest need for empowering resources as well as for inclusion in research, advocacy and policy (Bridger, 2018; Nyambura, 2018). Lastly, universities in South Africa and on the African continent more broadly, are conceptualised as spaces where the critical consciousness of the country's future citizenry and leadership are to be developed (Walker and Loots, 2016; Luescher-Mamashela, 2011). Due to the connection between HE and employment, the relatively small proportion of the population with access to HE,⁴ and the historical tendencies of political leaders to

⁴ According to Stats SA (2017a), less than 1.35 million people who were 20 years and older in South Africa have a university degree. From the population of nearly 52 million, this means that degree holders represent less than 3% of South Africans. Moreover, only 12% of the population overall held some kind of post-secondary education qualifications.

arise from university-educated populations, as I describe in more detail in Chapter Six, students are often considered to be the elite and/or the future elite of their countries. They are vested with leadership potential as future political echelons and thus discursively share ties with the FPEs. Consequently, research on students' perceptions of FPEs represents important insights into the future trajectories of the South African democracy.

Structure of the Thesis

The remainder of the thesis is structured into seven chapters. In Chapters Two through Four, I provide methodological, conceptual and socio-political context for the study. **Chapter Two** outlines the methodology, starting with the research site and data collection methods, followed by the ethical considerations, epistemological positionality inspired by decolonial, intersectional feminisms and concludes by recognizing the limitations of the study. **Chapter Three** outlines the foundational context of South African politics, HE and social order more broadly, highlighting the abuse of power and distrust as constitutive elements shaping the students' understanding of women in politics. **Chapter Four** describes the conceptual framework, which is based on research on role models in education and professional development, elite studies, and intersectionality and outlines how the thesis joins difference, identity, and power to analyse the RME of female political elites.

Chapters Five through Eight analyse normative power that shapes the perceptions of FPEs and offer the empirical evidence for the thesis' argument by addressing the three research sub-questions. **Chapter Five** looks at women in politics as career and life journey role models. It argues that the students do not perceive most women in politics in this way, because of the tenuous link between education and careers, and because of the lack of information that the students would desire to have about these women. Hence, most students had not consciously and deliberately used women in politics in their decision-making processes as a resource. **Chapter Six** examines the students' views of eliteness as both superior status and prestige, and as a powerful group of self-interested individuals. These views, reflected in the discourses on HE, result in the students'

contradictory and conflicted relationship with the term. The interpretation of eliteness as middle classness and understanding elites as leaders, however, arises as the link that enabled the students to connect to an ideal of an FPE and to articulate FPE as a symbol of their ideal self.

Chapters Seven and Eight describe the values, characteristics and behaviours that are vested in an FPE and show students' agency in the process of constructing norms about women in politics. The norms attached to FPEs, and consequently the two chapters as well, are shaped by two sets of discourses, which seek to discipline the students into maintaining the power status quo and curb their aspirations for change. **Chapter Seven** focuses on the discourse of 'being deserving,' which the students translate into the expectation that FPEs should achieve their positions and continue to deserve them by being educated, aware, hard-working and active. **Chapter Eight** is framed by the discourse of 'remembering where you come from'. It operates on the threat of exclusion from an imagined community of belonging and is connected to the expectation that FPEs care for their community and people, and that they remain steadfast against patriarchal power, greed and selfishness in order to deliver change. The students both challenge and conform to the power of these discourses and norms in various ways, highlighting the possibility of overcoming difference in order to change the patriarchal, racist and economically exclusionary social order.

Chapter Nine is the conclusion. In addition to summarizing the main argument, it also elaborates the contributions of this research and its implications for the RME theorising, feminist practice and research. The subsequent Appendix offers a summary of profiles of students who are mentioned multiple times in the thesis for readers' ease of reference, which is then followed by the group discussion and interview guidelines used to data collection.

2 Methodology: Practicing Intersectional Feminist Research

Introduction

In order to respond to the limitations of the existing RME scholarship and to centralise the power of norms in the RME theorising, the study was designed to be qualitative and thus it generated data through focus group discussions and interviews with UJ female students. The focus on the manifestations and perceptions of power and norms made the 'content' and the 'process' of data collection inseparable. In other words, because of the power that is inherently present in the research encounter, my interactions with the students, their experiences of being part of the research, and their perceptions of me co-created the mosaic that led me to articulate my argument and to produce this body of knowledge. Consequently, practicing intersectional, decolonial feminist approaches to knowledge production arises as the most suitable and relevant methodology for this research, which is situated within the South African and British academia.

In the remainder of the chapter I firstly describe the research site, the data collection methods and my participants. Subsequently, I share how I try to approach power and identities from the decolonial, intersectional feminist methodological positionalities, and how I address other ethical issues. Lastly, I explain how these considerations and methods shape the way the thesis is written and acknowledge some of the shortcomings vis-à-vis the aspiration of this research to be decolonial, intersectional and feminist.

Research Site

The University of Johannesburg is a comprehensive university, which in the South African context means that it offers degree programmes in both traditionally technical/vocational fields and research degrees (Bunting and Cloete, 2010) to nearly 50,000 students (University of Johannesburg, 2018). Created in 2005 as a merger of three institutions, namely the Rand Afrikaans University (RAU), Vista University and the Technikon Witwatersrand (Beukes, 2010), UJ is one of several public HE institutions which were formed in the early

2000s by joining together smaller institutions in an effort to transform the racially segregated South African academia. UJ's main campus in Auckland Park, Kingsway (APK) is the former seat of RAU and it served as my main research site and operational hub because the Department of Sociology, which granted me institutional affiliation, is based here. The Department also facilitated my visa letters, ethics approvals and other necessary paperwork for me to conduct this study at UJ, and its staff, especially Professor Kammila Naidoo, were very welcoming and generous with their support and guidance throughout my time in Johannesburg. The hospitality of the Department included their providing me with desk space, as well as access to internet, printing, and other infrastructure. Most crucially, however, it provided me entry points into the student body, through introductions to academics in other departments, access to lectures and tutorials and overall advice on how things work at UJ, both from the staff and student perspectives. On a more practical note, being granted a status of a visiting researcher, I became a constant presence in the Department, but I was neither a full staff member nor a full student.

The diversity of the student body, broadly reflective of the South African demographic make-up, relative affordability and the location in Gauteng province were the three key reasons for my selection of UJ as the research site. Every institution of HE is unique, with a specific organisational culture and profile. Being a historically white university (HWU) or an underprivileged Black African institution, sets up a particular experience for an individual student, which I demonstrate for example in Chapter Six with a discussion of the students' views of UJ in comparison to the so-called 'elite' University of Witwatersrand (Wits). Similarly, being located in a rural or an urban setting, or in a municipality and a province run by the ANC or the DA, are also factors that affect the research in a particular university setting. Hence, the focus on one institution against the backdrop of this uniqueness limits the research with regards to its ability to offer generalisations about South African female university students or youth more broadly. However, providing such broad insights is not the objective of the thesis; rather, it is to offer insights into the mechanisms of power and empowerment against the context of political representation and role model

debates. As I argue throughout the thesis, while the students are impacted by the University setting, their experiences, views, and self-perceptions do not stop or begin at the gates of their universities. They are shaped by the wider discourses and other lived realities of the students who interact with local and global issues and bring them into their university experience. Thus, getting to know the local context of a particular university was crucial for the analysis of power, which made it necessary for me to become embedded within one institution rather than attempting to do a large scale study with a statistically representative sample or a comparative study (Lewis and Russell, 2011).

Being focused on UJ allowed me sufficient time to build rapport with the students and to appreciate more fully the institutional context in which they functioned. Consequently, participant observation (PO) was one of the data collection methods. Anthropologist Russell Bernard defines participant observation as “experiencing the lives of the people you are studying’ and ‘immersing yourself in a culture and learning to remove yourself.... so you can intellectualize what you’ve seen and heard” (2006, 324). This understanding of PO as ‘experiencing’ the lives of the ‘people’ is in contradiction with the decolonial intersectional approach of this research and thus it deserves to be clarified that while my observations were an attempt to understand the student experiences, they were not and could not have been direct shared lived experiences, not least because there is no such thing as a unified lived experience of a female or a male student at UJ.

The University of Johannesburg, like most HE institutions in South Africa and around the world, is embroiled in neoliberal approaches to education. The corporate style management and global competition of HE institutions have caused obsessions with international rankings and comparisons amongst South African universities (Muller, 2017; Mbembe, 2016; Sall and Oanda, 2015). While Wits and the University of Cape Town (UCT) boast their leading positions on the continent, UJ’s media campaigns frequently highlighted the University’s achievements in climbing up the ladder within the category of ‘young’ institutions, which have been established only within the last 25 years

(University of Johannesburg, 2017a) or within the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) grouping (University of Johannesburg, 2016b). For example, during his engagement session with students in February 2017, the Vice-Chancellor (VC) Prof Ihron Rensburg praised UJ achievements in these rankings.

Transformation is a crucial criterion for the evaluation of HE institutions in South Africa. At the aforementioned engagement event, the VC praised UJ's transformation. Going beyond the racial make-up, he highlighted the rise of the student population from the so-called 'Q1-3' schools⁵ from 8% to 30%. In 2013, UJ was ranked 2nd in the country's university Equity Index, which measured demographic and gender equity changes in student enrolment (Govinder, Zondo and Makgoba, 2013) and as the University argued, its student population reflected the demographic make-up of the country, with 86% of the students coming from a "previously marginalized background" (University of Johannesburg, 2018). The Equity Index is arguably a weak measure of the transformation process as it, for example, does not account for academic considerations such as quality of research outputs (Booi, Vincent and Liccardo, 2017; Morris, 2014) and hence it was not a widely embraced and used ranking. In later chapters I delve into the debates of academic transformation of HE in South Africa in more detail; however, from a merely physically-symbolic perspective, as much as UJ sought to move away from its historical legacy, for example by re-naming residence halls (res-es) in 2015 from their RAU-era Afrikaans names to the student-preferred alternatives, the old Afrikaner foundations of APK remained obvious. The Afrikaans-English dual signs, the occasional plaques remembering the RAU historical milestones, or even the more mundane cue on your ATM bank slip specifying 'RAU' as your location, reminded the students, staff and other APK visitors of its Afrikaner past; hinting at incomplete and on-going institutional transformation.

⁵ In South Africa, schools are split into quintiles (Q1-5) according to their poverty scores in order to assist with the allocation of resources towards under-resourced school (Badat and Sayed, 2014). The quintile statistics referenced by the VC seek to suggest that students from poorer, under-resourced schools are getting access into university spaces, which had previously been limited to students from wealthier schools and family backgrounds.

As a public university, UJ's funding structure, as it was explained to the students by a UJ staff member at the aforementioned VC engagement event, comprised of three streams: student fees for tuition and accommodation, state subsidies and external income, for example for outside or online courses. Due to the insufficient state subsidies vis-à-vis the rising student numbers, universities had been increasing student fees. In 2015, however, the government decided to freeze the fees⁶ and in early 2017, VCs from multiple universities argued that should the decision to freeze fees be repeated for 2017 academic year, it would have a negative impact on university daily operations. While for some universities it meant a real threat of bankruptcy, for others, such as UJ, it meant adopting stringent cost-cutting measures. Engaging the staff, VC Rensburg highlighted that while in 2016 the university managed to cut down operation costs to cover the missing income, for 2017 it had no room to do so without staff redundancies.

The student political engagements with the university management, as well as with 'outside' political world, can be situated primarily in the offices of the Student Representative Council (SRC), not far from the Student Centre (SS). The SRC location seemed highly symbolic, because it is a stone's throw away from the school's auditorium, which was set on fire in May 2016. The burning of the auditorium brought some students into a direct conflict with the university management, as several SRC members and other politically active students, the so-called UJ17, were accused by the University management to be the culprits, which led to their suspension, followed by court action. The arson and its investigation were engulfed in many rumours and conspiracy theories featuring the University management, especially VC Rensburg, whose term in office ended

⁶ President Zuma agreed to freeze student fees for the 2016 academic year in response to the so-called Fallist student protests in 2015, which culminated in a march towards the Union buildings in Pretoria (seat of the Presidency) (Booyesen, 2016). While to some students it was a victory, as the president responded to the power of student organizing, to others it was far away from the demand of free education for all, which some of the Fallists advocate, and thus, it was not a systematic solution to their demands. Subsequently, further organizing took place in 2016 and the government funding policy for 2017 consisted of a recommended fee increase capped at 8%, which would be funded by the government for majority of the working class and poor students. I discuss the implications of this policy in more detail in Chapter Six.

in 2017 and who was succeeded by Prof Tshilidzi Marwala. Some students believed that the charge against the 17 students was orchestrated to silence 'problematic' student activists. For example, some of my respondents treated with suspicion the fact that security guards were seen walking around the auditorium area, yet they claimed to not have seen anything; they also found it peculiar that there was alleged camera footage, which existed for this particular case, while for many other investigations of incidents on campus the cameras were said to not have been working.

The area adjacent to the SRC offices was frequently used for student political agitations by student political bodies, which are closely if not directly tied to the main political parties in South Africa. For example, the APK SRC was elected by the student body in March 2017, with the Economic Freedom Fighters' Student Command (EFF SC) and DASO (DA Student Organisation) boycotting the election. Having faced SASCO (ANC aligned South African Students Congress and backed by the ANC Youth League (YL) and Young Communist League) the student opposition parties complained about the electoral systems regulating the leadership of the SRC and considered SRC structures to be pawns of the management (Mndebele, 2017; Mndebele and Ndongo, 2017). Student politics can thus be seen as a mezzo level between the students and the world of formal country politics. It serves as an important connector between the students' perceptions of FPEs, as I demonstrate throughout the thesis.

SRC offices are also adjacent to the 'day-houses', which are student associations that offer small hang-out spaces for students, who are daily commuters to APK, but who wish to be part of a student community similar to the one offered by res-es. UJ had shortages of on-campus accommodation for its students, many of whom wished to stay on campus. Therefore, many stayed in off-campus, university accredited accommodation, private housing and student communes (shared flats) or with relatives and families. In addition to the Library and the Arts Centre, where I held several of my interviews, the last location relevant to this research was the so-called 'F7' area– a mere half a dozen metal picnic tables under shaded trees right across from the SRC offices. This area could probably be

best described as infamous, because it is seen as a hang-out place of students with F7 academic status, meaning failing. To some, the F7 label represents students, whose place at UJ and within HE more broadly is questionable because of a prevalent view that students should deserve their HE by working hard, which as I argue in Chapter Seven, represents a discourse disciplining young South Africans.

In addition to APK, UJ has three other campuses, all of which have their own distinct characteristics, be it by their locations, the programmes of study taught there, or by their own institutional, pre-merger histories. For example, the Soweto Campus (SWC) is modern, fresh and attractive, fully 'Africanised' both by the names of its buildings after people like Hector Pieterse or Robert Sobukwe and by its student body. Having visited the campus on several occasions for class observations and to conduct a few interviews, it struck many of my research participants that I was one of a handful white people around. Taking the university-funded inter-campus buses to travel to SWC from APK, I was frequently the only white person, which was a reminder of the incomplete nature of the transformation process at UJ and the country more broadly. On the other hand, the Doornfontein Campus (DFC) located in the central business district (CBD) of Johannesburg, has higher levels of white students enrolling in classes in health and sports-related disciplines taught here. This racial distinction of DFC became apparent when I was advised by the students and staff in the Sociology Department to observe classes run at this campus, specifically in order to recruit white students for my research.

Focus Group Discussions and Semi-Structured Interviews

I adopted a two-stage research design consisting of focus group discussions (FGDs) and followed by semi-structured interviews (SSIs), whose structure and general list of questions can be found in the Appendix. FGDs are designed to elicit views and perceptions, while offering social interaction amongst participants as a specific source of data (Kitzinger, 1994). I chose FGDs because they are frequently used in studies with university students and youth, for example by Wasserman and Garman (2014), Bhana and Anderson (2013), and Bosch (2013),

as well as by feminist researchers in order to rebalance research power hierarchies between the researcher and the participants (Whitaker and Savage, 2015; Moloney, 2011). Building on a similar principle of power of the group, many development programmes with women's empowerment objectives establish women's groups and bring women together to facilitate the identification or realisation of shared experience and positions within wider societal structure, thus allowing for potential empowering effect stemming from the collective (Pini, 2002; Wilkinson, 1998). Additionally, many African feminists highlight that women on the continent tend to be more focused on the collective and the social (Akin-Aina, 2011; Tamale, 2008; Nnaemeka, 2004).

Consequently, due to the nature of the research topics and the research power dynamics, I convened the FGDs as the first research stage, and I did so in an informal manner and in a supportive environment to build trust and rapport, to ease any discomfort and power imbalance, and to obtain valuable information on the participants' perceptions. The FGDs were also used to assist me with testing the assumptions underpinning the research and to narrow down which of the students' identifications or experiences would appear to be of most relevance in affecting their views and perceptions of FPEs as role models.

Over the course of two months (September and October 2016), I held seven FGDs, five of which were women-only groups, one was men-only, and one was a mixed, self-organised group of campus activists. The focus of the research was not on the differentiated impact of FPEs on women and men, as is often the case in the literature.⁷ The perceptions of male students were outside of the scope of the study and hence there were no individual interviews with male students. The FGD with male participants was conducted as a litmus test to gauge whether any discourses, norms or issues were missing and whether the narratives raised by the women students were largely corresponding with the issues being raised by the men.

⁷ See for example Barnes and Burchard (2012) or Beaman et al. (2009) who focus on explaining the gender gap in political representation-participation nexus and hence are interested on the differentiated impact on women and men.

I recruited the participants in the single sex groups by attending lectures and tutorials, in which willing academics offered me some time to introduce myself and my research. Several departments agreed to send out an email to their students with the information about my research, which was contained on a flyer. In addition to my smiling face and contact details, the flyer included the following text: “Are you a South African student? Are you first or second year? Are you under 35 years old? Join my research and tell me what you think about South African female political elites!” 39 of my female participants signed up for the research immediately after a lecture or tutorial, where I introduced my research and 10 students emailed me directly in response to the flyer, in-class presentation or online announcement. 27 women then joined the research having been approached and recommended by another participant. Most of my exchanges with participants prior to the FGD or SSIs were thus via email and WhatsApp, which was a popular form of communication. The FGDs varied in the number of participants, ranging from 5 – 12 students and in total 47 female students participated in women’s only groups.

I captured some of the students’ identifications, demographic information and details of their studies and activities in short biographical forms. Students filled these forms out after having signed their consent forms and prior to commencing the FGDs. I had pre-established the focus of the research to be on South African female university students under the age of 35, because the South African government considers youth to be 15-34-year olds (The Presidency of South Africa, 2015). However, the majority of my participants were 18-22 years old as they were first and second year students, which was a criterion because my data collection was taking place over two academic years and students in their final year would potentially not be available in 2017 after having graduated.

In addition to their age, the form captured information on racial/ethnic identification, markers of class (source of funding for studies), religion, motherhood, civic engagement (membership in organisations or extra-curricular activities) and residency (coming from urban or rural setting), as literature has shown these characteristics to impact women’s political behaviour. Students

were free not to answer any of the questions they did not want to, and the questions were formulated to allow self-identification, in terms preferred by the students, rather than being limited to pre-determined categories. The students who did not participate in FGDs, but whom I only interviewed, did not fill out this form. However, I captured most of the information about the students' background during the course of the interview.

I expected the students' being South African to be the least problematic characteristic to establish during the participant recruitment. However, it turned out to be as contestable a determination as self-identifying with a particular class or race. Students, who have lived their whole lives in the country, but lacked the government papers to be legitimised as citizens or even residents in the eyes of the state, felt that South Africa was their home, even if 'home-home'⁸ was somewhere else. They knew more about South Africa than the countries where they or their parents emigrated from, be it in Southern Africa or Eastern Europe. Hence, non-citizen students who lived in South Africa were also included in the research. Together with the other, aforementioned categories of identification, the question of who can 'pass for' South African in their lived-experiences and who believed and was believed to be South African in contrast to the state-adjudication, highlighted the need for an approach which was not rigid in using identity categories.

Combing through my preliminary data in November 2016, no matter how the students' identification categories and experiences got mixed and matched in my analysis, no clear patterns and links to explaining views of FPEs were arising. Consequently, I asked all the students who had participated in FGDs to meet for an individual interview, if they were willing to continue to participate in my

⁸ Many students would use this phrase to show that the location where their parents' families originated from and where the students' extended familial networks resided was not in the place where they lived at the time of the research. Similarly, they would sometimes clarify where they are 'from-from', to specify not their current residence, but where they and their families are from. While for some students it meant a different country, such as Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo or Angola, for other students it meant a different province of South Africa, which reflects the racial segregation policies of the apartheid regime, which controlled the populations through administrative territories, which for the Black African populations were called Bantustans or homelands.

research. Thirty-nine of these students then participated in the SSIs. I interviewed additional 37 UJ students across various stages of their studies, as well as three non UJ students and five non-student key informants, resulting in the total of 86 formal one-on-one interviews. The additional students were individuals who had expressed interest in the group discussions, but they had not managed to attend; or they were targeted referrals from my existing participants, whom I asked for assistance with identifying additional participants. The interviews, which took place in the period of November 2016 – May 2017, lasted on average 90 – 100 minutes. The length of the interview was adjusted to the needs of the student. Several students met with me multiple times and the interviews were thus split, in order to accommodate their other commitments or limitations. Some key informants, such as a youth culture journalist or an education activist were interviewed via Skype due to difficulties with scheduling in person meetings.

Many students who participated in both stages of my research made direct references to the FGDs during their interviews. For example, when I asked Kiara, who came to mind when she heard the term FPE, she responded, “Like we said, Thuli Madonsela and Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma [my emphasis].” Referring to women in politics that were discussed during her FGD, Kiara made a direct connection to her previous engagement in the research. She further shared with me that she sometimes messaged the other participants and exchanged greetings with them when they ran into each other on campus. Other interviewees only subconsciously used the same words to describe FPEs and did not refer overtly to the FGDs. For instance, Sage Marley used the word ‘powerhouse’ as a characteristic of an ideal FPE – a word that was not common in the public discourse in South Africa, nor was it a word that was used in other groups besides hers, where it was introduced by another student to describe the former Public Protector, Thuli Madonsela.⁹ Hence, FGDs served as a shared reference point during the interviews.

⁹ The office of the public protector is one of South Africa’s ‘chapter 9 institutions’, meaning that it was established by the constitution’s chapter 9, together with the Commission for Gender Equality, the South African Human Rights Commission and others, to strengthen and protect the country’s democracy. The public protector’s office investigates issues of alleged improper

Ethical Considerations

The FGDs as well as the majority of the SSIs took place at APK, while a handful of interviews were conducted at other UJ campuses and off-campus cafes. The key criterion for each location and time was to least inconvenience the students. I covered the travel expenses for several students, if they travelled to campus or another location solely for the purposes of the interview, while many refused my offer to cover these costs. All of the interview locations were public and informal in their ambiance, because they facilitated open, casual conversation and put students at ease. Meeting in a closed, private spaces such as an office, which is a frequent interview practice in university research, used for example by Singh (2016), would have ensured a higher level of confidentiality. However, this would not have guaranteed more openness, and could have potentially intimidated the students as well. Moreover, on a practical level, it would have been difficult to organise private interview spaces at APK because of bureaucratic procedures and spatial constraints. Additionally, due to the nature of the research there was no particular need to take extraordinary measures to protect participants' identity and therefore meeting in open spaces did not present problems with regard to research ethics.

Students were not compensated for their participation, but most accepted a tea, coffee or another drink as a token of gratitude for their time during the interviews, while all of the FGDs were supplied with cold drinks and snacks as a small incitement to volunteer. All of the FGDs and SSIs were recorded, with none of the participants expressing concerns about being recorded, nor did any of the students feel uncomfortable with providing written consent for their

conduct of state affairs brought to its attention by the citizens, including political parties, and has the power to set remedial action that is legally binding. Prior to Thuli Madonsela's tenure, which ended in November 2016, the institution was not as well-known, but through her highly visible cases, the office became known as the beacon of the country's democracy, together with the courts (Gumede, 2015). Due to the nature of the office, it is very much individualised and personified, despite the fact that it involves the collective work of dozens of staff members, including in regional branches. Madonsela investigated several cases of corruption which resonated with my respondents. These included primarily her reports on President Zuma's misuse of public funds to upgrade his personal homestead in his home village in Nkandla in KZN, which was published in 2014, but faced legal challenges until 2016; and her report on State Capture, published in November 2016, which started to shed light on corruption in public procurement and the collusion between politicians, state owned enterprises (SOEs) and private businesses.

participation. The consent forms were provided electronically to the students prior to our meeting, be it for the FGD or SSI, if at all possible. The research was conducted in English, so no translation or the use of research assistants was necessary. As it is the language of instruction at UJ, the students did not have difficulties with communicating in English. Detailed, annotated notes from the recordings were used as the bases for the subsequent analysis. As part of the consent-gaining process, students were advised that all data would be securely stored in electronic form and password protected. No special encryption software was used due to the low level of security threat.

The students' and other participants' names used throughout the thesis are either their real names or pseudonyms. The students decided themselves which of the two options they preferred, after having been advised about confidentiality and other readers' ability to recognise them should they pick their real names. However, I generalise some details about the students to enhance their protection, for example, listing the province and the urban/rural setting of the place where they are from, rather than naming the specific locality. In several instances (see for example pages 174, 218 and 220) I refrain from using the students' real names despite their permission to do so. It is an extra measure of precaution against potential negative backlash against their views, which some readers may find hurtful or controversial. All other specific wishes made by the students, for example withholding their children's or parents' names, were fully respected.

As the conversations focused on students' lives and perceptions of power, the students drew on their personal experiences amongst other sources of information, and for many it included psychologically and emotionally painful memories. The students had been warned prior to our research engagement that my questions might provoke such feelings and I had encouraged them to answer only as they felt comfortable and to reveal only as much detail as they deemed fit. Several students shared very painful memories, including of racial abuse in school, experiences of poverty, discrimination, injustice and humiliation, as well as gender-based violence (GBV). In such instances, the students were supported

to talk about the issue at hand to the extent that they found most appropriate for them.

Participants' Background

Students who participated in my research came from various backgrounds and were able to self-identify along various characteristics, including race. In South Africa there are four main racial classifications of Black African, Indian/Asian, Coloured and white, which have been maintained by the democratic government after the end of apartheid. Over the decades of the apartheid regime, established by the National Party (NP) in 1948, the terminologies and the adjudications of the classifications have changed; for example, classification term Black African arose from terms like native or Bantu (Seekings, 2008b) and their delimitations became increasingly more stringent (Posel, 2001). Despite the constitutional commitment to non-racialism and de-racialization of much of the state legislature in the 1990s, the continuation of the racial categories is linked to the political objectives of socio-economic redress and to the operationalization of some affirmative action policies (Seekings, 2008b). For example, Statistics SA, the official government statistical agency, provided the following six options for racial identification, labelled as 'population groups': Black African, Coloured, Indian/Asian, white, other, and 'prefer not to identify' (Stats SA, 2016a). The four categories thus naturally continue to be used in research and policy and most importantly, they are part of the social fabric and consciousness of South Africans. Thus, they are evoked and used in the thesis, but are seen as contested rather than set categories and are understood as being re-defined and questioned, which underscores the importance of research participants' ability to self-identify using their own terms.

In addition to the fluidity and complexity of demarcating the four racial categories, there are often further conflations and substitutions of categories based on ethnicity and colour. Vincent and Howell (2014) point out that South Africans across different racial groups tend to hide the issue of race discursively by substituting race for culture, ethnicity or class. Consequently, the analysis of difference within racial groups and the constitution of identities along various

discursive markers becomes conflated. For example, students often spoke about ethnic, tribal, group or cultural stereotypes and animosities, as linked to the Zulu, Xhosa, Tsonga or Pedi peoples, to name a few; as well as about the differences between the English whites and Afrikaners, or Chinese and Indian Asians. Similarly, students described and used stereotypes associated with skin shades or tones amongst Black Africans in South Africa and from around the continent, and also described the skin colour differences amongst whites, me included. I analyse in more detail these differences in Chapter Eight, as they pertain to the notion of belonging and community, because they affect the students' lived realities and are consequently projected into their perceptions and expectations of FPEs. Moreover, they also impact students' ability and desire to be seen as exceptional/or exceptions to these communities of belonging.

The research participants also came from various economic situations, which are analysed primarily in Chapter Five, but are interwoven throughout the thesis. Most frequently their economic status is revealed in their descriptions of the education and employment of their parents and guardians, their housing and access to services, such as electricity, water and sanitation, mode of transportation and commute to university, as well as their ability to afford food and tuition fees. However, their identification with a particular class label or their own understanding of their lived experiences do not always match these markers, which I problematise in the said chapter. Residency (rural vs. urban living, and township¹⁰ vs. non-township setting) is also a frequently used proxy of economic status, but must also be problematised, especially as many townships such as Johannesburg's Soweto, are sites of dynamic change and unequal development. Therefore, although I specify whether the students came from a township or not, it cannot be automatically assumed as an indication of poverty. The majority of the students came from the province of Gauteng, where

¹⁰ Townships in South Africa refer to racially segregated residential areas close to or within urban centres, which started emerging in the 19th century, but became heavily regulated with urban areas legislature in the 1920s. Townships were mostly meant to supply cheap, predominantly Black African labour to support the white economy, while restricting and surveying the movement and rights of the Black population. Townships were marked by high levels of poverty due to the under/non-investment from the state, and the lack of infrastructure and services continues to plague many townships to date (Kihato, 2014).

UJ is located, while others came from the Eastern Cape, the Free State, KZN, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North West and the Western Cape. There were no students from the Northern province. The students also came from both rural and urban settings.

Lastly, the students also came from diverse religious and faith-based positionalities. The majority of the students identified as Christians of various denominations, ranging from Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Pentecostals, Seven Day Adventists to members of the Zion Christian Church. Some were actively involved as youth leaders, readers or musicians, others were avid congregation members and church goers, yet others considered their faith in God important, even if they did not go to church while at varsity. There was also a considerable group of students, who were brought up in a church-going household, but they saw it more of a ritual practice that was a requirement from their elders, than something that they themselves desired to do. Several students in my research also identified as Muslim, Hindu or followers of traditional African religions. Their faith and religions also played a varying degree of importance. To some Muslims, for example, their faith was important and affected their political views, such as their rejection of the DA over its position on the Palestine and Israel conflict. To others, their religion was important in their personal lives, and impacted decisions such as whom and when to marry, or which religious holidays to observe and which traditions to follow with regards to eating or physical appearance. For many of these students, there was a complex, unresolved relationship between their culture and their religion – for example, many differentiated between their Muslim/Hindu faiths and what they perceived as traditional Indian culture, creating a conflation of values that they had to navigate and reconcile.

The importance of religion in my research emerged even before I personally met any of the students in 2016. They communicated and performed their religiosity in their WhatsApp statuses and on social media. As I recruited participants and added them into my WhatsApp contact lists, their statuses showed messages asking for God's blessings and strength. Twitter feeds from UJ students and other

young South African opinionistas often evoked Bible verses or prayers, while many emails or messages were ended with signatures wishing God's blessings. A similar range of attitudes towards religion and religiosity was found by Brittian, Lewin and Norris (2013) in their study amongst 18-year-old Black Africans from urban areas of Johannesburg. In their study they found that religion offers young people a moral compass, a sense of belonging, and a social support mechanism. Moreover, they found that it offers a cross-generational connection and allows them to know where they come from.

Situated Knowledge: Importance of Decolonisation and #FeesMustFall

During my data collection, the South African academic spaces were heavily impacted by student activism, collectively known as Fallism. Popular representations of Fallism depict it as a student led movement¹¹ and a wave of social and political activism revolving partially around the question of decolonisation of HE and partially around other iterations of social justice struggles. Fallism's origins are said to be in the #RhodesMustFall (RMF) campaign at UCT in 2015, and the push to have the statue of Cecil John Rhodes removed from a prominent space on campus. The removal was a manifestation of wider debates at UCT about institutional racism and structural violence experienced by Black students, which evolved into broader debates of decolonisation, financial exclusion, and violence against women and queer bodies.¹² RMF developed into broader Fallism through various hashtag

¹¹ The conceptualisation of Fallism as a 'movement' or a unified form of organising has been contested. In 2016-2017 there was a debate within Fallist circles about whether the 'movement' should formalise and centralise and thus function through elected representatives and form structures on a national level in order to enhance its impact. These debates became especially important in the first half of 2017, because there had been no joint, nation-wide mass student action and only sporadic, localised and campus-based protest actions (Langa, 2017; ROAPE, 2017). In addition to the geographical isolation of campuses, political and ideological differences amongst Fallists were also causing fractions and impotence, suggesting that it is better understood as series of activisms. While some accused political parties of interference and trying to usurp and splinter the movement, others pointed to the genuine differences on issues such as whether HE should be free for all students, including those who can afford to pay, or only to those within certain economic brackets (Duncan, 2016; Pithouse, 2016). The role of social media and joint online activism through hashtags adds another layer of complexity in internet-age mobilising and social movement conceptualising (Luescher, Loader and Mugume, 2017).

¹² The leading role of Black Radical Intersectional Feminists (BRIF) in instigating, theorising and pursuing Fallist struggles has led to reflecting on feminist identity and politics in South Africa (Khan, 2017; Ndlovu, 2017; Gouws, 2016b; Miller, 2016). As Hassim (2006b) highlights, there had not been a unified women's movement in South Africa and the heterogeneity amongst women's rights/ feminist activists continues. Many Fallists claimed a feminist identity,

campaigns, including #PatriarchyMustFall and #FeesMustFall (FMF) which spread across the country and had their localised, campus-specific iterations such as #OpenStellenbosch. However, activism around the experiences of Black African students at formerly white institutions and financial exclusion in HE is much longer than the events sparked at UCT (Luescher and Klemenčič, 2016; Luescher, Loader and Mugume, 2017; Badat and Sayed, 2014). Similarly, the calls for the decolonisation of universities have a rich history in South Africa (Mamdani, 1998; Ntsebeza, 2014), across the continent, and in other post-colonial settings. However, in the popular representations and debates around Fallism, these historical trajectories were under-reported, as were the student activities at institutions which were not historically white.

Fallism re-politicised the well-researched problems of structural and systematic barriers to students' completion of HE degrees, such as the poor quality of secondary education and inadequate English language competencies, which make some students ill-equipped to handle varsity requirements. These problems are combined with other factors, such as financial difficulties or alienating, white/Eurocentric institutional set up of most universities. Many Black African students and academics alike underscore that in order to perform well within the university setting they have to act white and exhibit signs of whiteness in order to be acceptable, be it in their speech, attire or otherwise (Booi, Vincent and Liccardo, 2017). The pressure to perform against white standards often takes a negative emotional and psychological toll because their lives become a balancing act of wearing different masks or moving in between two worlds, which explains why the ideologies of Steve Biko and Franz Fanon have had such resonance with many people in HE (Omar, 2016). The experiences of feeling like one has to wear different masks, complements the students' expectations and desire for authenticity in their leaders and in the value that

highlighting however, their radical positioning in comparison to South African womanists/feminists, who worked within the patriarchal structures. Hence, many BRIF Fallists criticised feminists/women who did not challenge the structures. Consequently some adopted a radical use of violence and connected to women like Winnie Madikizela-Mandela or the Black Panthers in the USA, who were perceived to be radical and revolutionary. The BRIF activists also criticised binary approach to gender and sexuality, which can be seen in their widespread use of womxn in their writing as well as inclusion of trans and non-binary bodies (Miller 2016; Mupotsa 2017).

they assign to personal experience in the context of social distrust, which I discuss in Chapter Four.

Overt incidents of systematic racism which show the remnants of white privilege in HE are numerous and easy to identify. At UJ, for example, the ability of Afrikaner students to study Accounting in Afrikaans, as well as to receive additional tutoring, which gave them an undeserved advantage, was used as an illustration by some students. Although most Black students in my research did not feel or think they experienced overt forms of racial discrimination in a classroom setting, which made UJ a comparatively speaking a special institution, stories like that of the Accounting Department served as a reminder that undeserved privileged continued even at an institution with a predominantly Black African student population. At the same time, it also underscores that many students, who come from Afrikaans speaking high schools, also struggle with language competencies. However, as many Fallists highlight, unlike other students, Afrikaans speakers are able to pursue varsity degrees in their mother tongue at one of the country's numerous institutions with dual English and Afrikaans language of instruction, which speakers of Bantu African languages cannot.

The toxic cocktail of structural and epistemic violence in HE is finalised with the political and social pressures to increase Black African student enrolment. This is pursued in order to demonstrate the post-apartheid transformation of South Africa towards a more just society, and an economically stronger country. Retaining the increasing number of students then arises as a key challenge for universities because the aforementioned structural issues lead to high drop-out rates, especially of students who come from poor backgrounds or who do not have suitable conditions to study (Ndebele et al., 2013). The drop-out rates between first and second year at UJ in 2014 were 20% (Van Zyl and Motsabi, 2016) and many academics who I spoke to mentioned that retention was a big concern of the university's management. Increasing the 'through-put' of students, therefore, featured heavily on their minds and #FeesMustFall only intensified the sense of urgency and pressure to deal with institutional barriers to Black

students' success. At the same time, some academics argue that many students with insufficient skills should not be accepted into university just for the sake of demonstrating government's commitment to transformation through massification of HE, meaning a process of expanding the number of university student through de-racializing education access. Nonetheless, due to these systematic features of the education system, universities often reproduce the socio-economic inequalities that they are meant to address, with many underprivileged students not being able to successfully complete their degrees (Hodes, 2017; Mbembe, 2016; Van Zyl, 2016; Van Zyl and Motsabi, 2016; Badat and Sayed, 2014; Higham, 2012).

Many British institutions, including my own institution SOAS, became actively involved in similar discussions around the same time, with initiatives such as 'Why is my curriculum white' also advocating for the necessity of decolonisation of academia (Sabaratnam, 2017; Decolonising Our Minds, 2016). According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni, decoloniality is "the idea of remarking the world such that the enslaved, colonised, and exploited people can regain their ontological density, voice, land, history, knowledge and power" (2015a, 23). Decolonial thought thus needs to lead to changes in research methodologies, which are often rooted in the disciplinary strait-jackets and acceptable ways of knowing (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017). Consequently, many scholars argue that decolonisation means the replacement of the assumed universality of Eurocentric knowledge systems with a plurality of knowledges (Darder, 2018; le Grange, 2016; Mbembe, 2016; Tselapedi, 2016; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015a; Oloruntoba, 2015; Smith, 2012).

The campaigns to end the exploitation of workers, especially the outsourcing of maintenance and cleaning staff and their precarious position at both institutions, further enhanced the parallels between SOAS and South African academia. Fallists who saw the students' struggles over fees in connection to the precarious situation of university workers committed themselves towards fighting for insourcing of university cleaning, security and other staff and their ideological position was thus against the wider neoliberal capitalism that underpinned the South African economy. It is this ideological connection that according to Satgar

(2016) links Fallism to the second wave of South African social movement struggles that started in 2007, and which focused on service delivery issues for the poor and were famously titled by Peter Alexander (2010) as the ‘rebellion of the poor’.

Parallels between the two academic spaces – SOAS and UJ – also became evident in my discussions with UJ staff and in the critique of the two HE systems in the literature (Booi, Vincent and Liccardo, 2017; Muller, 2017; Sall and Oanda, 2015). Many South African academics talked to me about the pressures and competing demands that are put on them from their institutions. The need to ‘publish or perish’ on the one hand, was juxtaposed with the need to teach classes for hundreds of students in order to right the wrong of apartheid and to use education as a means to poverty eradication. While on a theoretical level extensive teaching is a sign of highly appraised transformation of HE, it does not bring any academic credit or prestige to the academic staff. Moreover, being time and labour intensive, it was often deemed as academic suicide. Research grants from the National Research Foundation (NRF), the lecturer research appraisals and rankings, and financial incentives for publishing are another facet of the neoliberal capitalist logic in South African and British academia together with the aforementioned university ranking systems (Levidow, 2004). The performance targets then often lead to questionable quality of outputs and the inability of young academics and academics of colour to progress through the system.

It must be underscored that racialised experiences within South African academic spaces are gendered, especially as far as the ability of Black women to succeed in academic ‘ivory towers’ is concerned. Their marginalisation has been criticised for decades, especially by post-colonial, third world and African feminist scholars (Pailey, 2016; Mama, 2007; Salo, 2007; Spivak, 1988). Akala and Divala (2016), Lewis (2016), Barnes (2007) and others show that the gender gap in HE can be seen in various domains, including in university management, lectureship positions, curricula and in academic publishing. The intersectional dynamics of power in South Africa is thus similar to other regions, where the male scholarship dominates over female authored research, thus positioning

scholars of colour at the bottom of the academic hierarchy (Briggs and Weathers, 2016).

Consequently, decolonisation and intersectionality became prevalent analytical approaches to questioning power in South Africa, which was important to the students with whom and amongst whom I conducted this research; however, it was also an integral issue of my personal academic experience in the UK. There are many intellectual traditions, including the writings of many postcolonial, anti-colonial and Afro-feminist scholars which question global epistemic inequalities and who could offer an analytical approach to questioning power, especially in knowledge production. Despite the relevance of these various theoretical and methodological approaches, the appeal of the decolonisation discourses to the students and its dominance in the academic spaces in which I conducted the research, made it into the most appropriate tool to tackle this question of epistemic and other power inequalities and thus shaped both my methodological and conceptual approaches, which I address in Chapter Four.

Reflections on Positionality and Power

The information that the students and other key informants shared with me during our encounters were a result of mutual interpretations of each other's identities and understanding of the South African and global realities. Hence, the individual engagements were unique in the way in which they were affected by power. As part of my research methodology, I shared with all the participants some of my personal and academic background. While explaining the research objectives, processes, and their implications for the students prior to their joining the research, I included a brief context of my academic career at SOAS. As an ice-breaker during both FGDs and SSIs, I told the students about being Slovak and answered any of their questions, many of which revolved around my prior experiences in South Africa and my impressions of the country, as well as the reasons why I had decided to pursue this particular research. The students' perceptions of me as a white male studying 'women's issues' in South Africa, a foreigner/outsider, an Eastern European studying at a British university, a seemingly young and financially well to do person, or any and all of these

identities combined, consciously and subconsciously may have affected their subsequent interview responses. Consequently, they also shaped my insights into the role of power in understanding symbolic political representation and the RME.

My interviews with Aria and Thando serve as illustrative examples of the diversity of engagements and interpretations. Aria portrayed herself as someone who could be described in South Africa as a non-racialist, because although she thought race had an impact on people's lives, especially with regards to accessing economic resources, she claimed she did not let race influence her interactions and views of other people. She defined herself as African and said she did not like it when people asked her about her ethnicity. She was from Mpumalanga, but she had moved to Gauteng where she went to a well-resourced high school, although it did not assist her with applying to university. She was an "aspiring plus size model", who felt bullied and judged in school, but had no one to talk to because her parents, who both worked in the public sector, travelled a lot. She was a poet, taking part in poetry groups and jam sessions, but was not a member of any societies or organisations. As she was sharing her views about the society, she said:

Aria: I can sit here with you and have a conversation, [and] people would be judging us and I wouldn't notice, because I'm currently busy, but if I had been in a surrounding where I'm actually noticing my *entire* surrounding, you tend to feel judged. Every *stare* is a judgement in my eyes, you know.

Ján: would we be judged because you're black and I'm white?

Aria: [sigh] yah, ... I feel like South Africans are very narrow-minded.

Thando on the other hand was not thinking about other people during the interview, but about my perceptions of what she was saying. She was an African young woman from KZN, whose family was closely tied to the ruling ANC, as her parents worked in the public sector. Yet Thando herself was not actively involved in political parties or student organisations at UJ. She believed that African culture, especially customs and traditions such as slaughtering or black magic, had been forgotten and devalued under the influence of colonial Christian

conversion. During our interview, some of her answers made me suspect that the racial difference between us mattered to her, so at the end of the conversation I directly asked her whether she would have said things differently had I been Black African. Her response caught me off guard, because we had met twice before – once in her FGD and another time for an informal hang-out with her and her friend just before Christmas 2016. Back then we spoke about our families, holiday traditions and I thought it was very clear that I was a foreigner, with very different customs, worldviews and personal histories from most white South Africans. Nonetheless, she admitted that she censored herself, that she expressed things differently, because she did not know whether I would get offended as a white person, and a white Christian more specifically.

The two interviews illustrate how the participants differed in their interpretations of the research encounters based on their understanding of the world, their personal experiences and their application of their worldviews into the research process (Liong, 2015; Tarrant, 2014). In Thando's case, one can argue that she was trying to be sensitive to the potential upset that she could cause based on the differences that she expected existed between us based on what she had witnessed amongst Blacks and whites in South Africa. In other words, she was trying to avoid our conversation getting 'heated,' friendships getting ruined and feelings getting hurt as many students said happened when South Africans discussed politics.

Instead of avoiding or minimizing tensions with me, many students took the opportunity to teach me about "their culture." They were responding to their experiences of lack of interest and distrust amongst people from various races or other backgrounds that I outline in more detail in Chapter Three and throughout the whole thesis. However, to minimise the potential of insulting or disgruntling me, these students would frequently nuance their responses about the behaviours of whites or men by saying, "no offense" or suggesting that their views pertain to "most" men/whites, implying that if I felt differently from what they were saying, I could exclude myself from their portrayal of people like me.

Due to the power inequalities within South Africa that the students experience, many of my respondents may have felt the need or the desire to defend the positive impact of women in positions of power and Black women in particular. In response to the frequent downplaying of racism and patriarchy in the country, many students could have felt the pressure to present these women to me in a positive light, or at least to be less critical of their actions, in order to reassert their worth because they are frequently devalued and dehumanised. Hence, their responses to me may have differed from what they might have expressed to their peers. This behaviour emerges especially as many students did not know the details about the performance and impact of women politicians that we discussed, but they made assumptions about them, as I discuss in more detail in Chapter Five.

The portrayal of FPEs that the students presented would have also been moderated by their perception of my curiosity and interest in the 'subject'. Assuming that I was studying female political elites in South Africa out of genuine interest in gender inequality and with the objective to better understand women's situation in the country, some students were inclined to share their criticism of the elites, whom they perceived to be causing or contributing to the bad situation in the country. At the same time, they could also be exaggerating the plight of non-elite women and men to demonstrate the inequality that exists amongst elites and 'the Others' and the urgency with which these differences need to be addressed. Hence, my research encounters underscore the need for intersectional thinking, which does not see a researcher only as an insider or an outsider based on their geographical, epistemological, or identity-based positionality, but a more multifaceted being, who interjects into the individual world of each research participant in complex ways that cannot be dissected into neat individual categories.

Similarly to my respondents, I also approached the research encounters based on my pre-existing knowledge of the South African scholarship, as well as my feminist politics and personal experiences. I was affected by my prior visits to Tshwane (Pretoria), Johannesburg and Cape Town as a development practitioner

and tourist. When I worked in South Africa several years before I started my PhD, I was inserted into a team of young Black African intern staff and their/our domestic and international superiors. Through this experience, I had been exposed to and incorporated into the domestic power dynamics of the office and the country, while being nested in the global North-South hierarchies of the development industry. My perceptions of the negative views that the older generations of South Africans held about varsity graduates with whom I worked showed me the marginalisation that the youth sometimes face despite their seeming empowerment through HE.

During my subsequent data collection, I was frequently reminded of my past experiences in South Africa - the familiarity of smells of the deep-fried vetkoeks (doughnuts) spreading from a supermarket on my way to UJ, or the sounds of hadeda ibis birds in the early mornings, kept my past memories fresh in my mind. Unlike during my earlier time in South Africa, however, I became more inquisitive and conscious of my emotional responses to seemingly mundane events and encounters that made me question the South African society. For example, I recall feeling enraged when I was approached in a supermarket by a white stranger who presumed that I spoke Afrikaans as a white man. I still vividly feel the offence that overwhelmed me then for being seen as a member of the community that was ascribed the historical legacy of apartheid. I was also hurt and disappointed when I was called 'a white boy' by a group of young Black African men as I walked down a street in parts of Johannesburg's CBD, where I felt that I probably should not be; yet, I made those quotidian choices to enter these spaces as my personal symbolic rebellions against the stereotypes about people like me.

In response to these mundane moments, as well as my research encounters such as the aforementioned interview with Thando, I was forced to engage with my position in a system of inequalities and privileges, which were not exceptional to South Africa or to something that could be compartmentalised to 'in the field' experience. Under the influence of feminist literature and engagements at SOAS, I came to see my emotional reactions as processes of coming to terms with my

privileges that were structural and global, and which protected and strengthened my life opportunities whether I recognised them as such or not. I tried to critically question my gut instincts to use the typical adages: 'not all people like me are like that' and continually asked what my responses revealed about the structures that effect my respondents as much as me. Overall, I preconditioned myself to stay alert to overt and covert expressions of othering and (dis)empowerment, and consequently, to actively gauge and validate the perceptions of the marginalised, which I expected, sometimes mistakenly, to be mostly amongst Black African and Coloured women from poor/lower class contexts. I learnt to problematise and nuance these assumptions through critically questioning how and why my participants' responses emerged.

Many methodological norms in social sciences seek to minimise the 'negative' impacts of differences in data collection. Based on my feminist, decolonial orientations in this research, however, I reject the intellectual tradition, which seeks to minimise difference in a feeble attempt of enabling a discovery of some positivist truth. To the contrary, I tried to decrease power differences, while constantly acknowledging their continued existence, presence and impact and while treating them as sources of information integral to the final knowledge that was produced. The aforementioned interview with Thando demonstrates my direct approach to questioning difference and allowing the students to reflect on its importance together with me, rather than me reflecting on it on my own after the research encounter (Gildersleeve, 2010). However, I came to this practice gradually, during the data collection process, as the need for such approach became clearer to me in order to deliver a decolonial, intersectional research project from my positionality.

Additionally, I attempted to facilitate the students' active engagement in my research and enhance their control over the knowledge production. On an epistemological level, this included the aforementioned choice to use the non-prescriptive concept of 'female political elite' and giving the students the ability to shape the research to their own context by not providing my own definitions of FPEs. Similarly, I avoided introducing the term 'role model' in order to

minimise conditioning the students into thinking that they should consider women in politics as role models; nor did I ask the students directly about role models in connection to other people in their lives. For example, when discussing their careers, education-related decisions, hopes and plans for the future, I asked the students about people in their lives who they wanted to be like or whose life they would like to have; people who they found successful, inspirational or who they looked up to, people who 'have made it in life'; and people who impacted or played a role in their decision-making. While some students instinctively responded using the phrase 'role model,' others did not use the term at all, be it in connection to women in politics, or any other individuals we discussed. Therefore, although I refer to the students' role models throughout the thesis, it does not always reflect their own choice of words.

On the methodological level, my decolonial feminist efforts were reflected in the combined use of FGDs and SSIs, because, as it has been mentioned, they have the potential to give participants a sense of empowerment in sharing experiences with others or by gaining a voice in a context of marginalization that many young women in South Africa experience (Hlalele and Brexa, 2015; Nencel, 2014; Moloney, 2011). The students' responses to these two methods varied. Some students enjoyed the group setting, because they had joined the FGDs in order to learn from others and to listen to others' views. Therefore, some stayed quiet and did not engage much, but had a lot to say in the personal setting of the SSI instead. Others were opinionated, vocal and fearless in both settings, but preferred the one-on-one SSI, as it gave them a chance to express themselves more clearly; yet a few students were quiet and timid in both instances. Hence, the combination of the research methods worked in a complementary way because it afforded the students at least one opportunity to be in a setting they preferred.

Transnational feminist writers, such as Ella Shohat or Chandra Mohanty, offer some inspiration as to how to methodologically approach decolonial, intersectional feminist objectives against the theories developed in and by western-centric scholarship. In the revisit of her seminal piece *Under the Western*

Eyes, Mohanty (2003) argues that women's solidarity rooted in 'common differences' needs to work against capitalism and global neoliberalism, whose power comes to the fore when one considers the perspective of the most marginalised. She writes, "[a] transnational feminist practice depends on building feminist solidarities across the divisions of place, identity, class, work, belief, and so on. In these very fragmented times it is both very difficult to build these alliances and also never more important to do so" (Mohanty, 2003, 250). Political economists, Ferguson (2010), Saad-Filho and Johnston (2004) and others similarly underscore the adverse effects of neoliberalism on the world's majority, especially the poor and labour movements as forms of collective organising. This system of capitalism, built on financial capital, "concentrate[s] the power and wealth in elite groups around the world" (Saad-Filho and Johnston, 2004, 1) and is built on values of individualism, competition and citizen responsibility. Thus, it is able to maintain power through joint social, economic and political means.

By operationalizing this research on women in politics through the term 'female political elite' the intersectional understanding of gender, neoliberalism and racism as systems of power and exploitation that create reinforcing and self-perpetuating sets of norms is intensified and brought to the fore. Chapter Six unpacks the term elite in more detail, drawing on discussions of self-identification in class belonging in the South African context. Throughout the thesis, manifestations of neoliberal values of individual responsibility, critique of dependency and market-based valuation of worth and productivity are mentioned, particularly in Chapter Seven and the discourses of '*being deserving*'.

Another way of finding solidarities, according to Shohat (2002), is by mapping how concepts travel and by putting various disciplines and studies into conversation. Approaching intersectionality in research by articulating values, characteristics and behaviours that are attached to the FPEs by a wide range of students has the potential for finding new ways to articulate and consider feminist solidarities for social justice and activism. Fusing women's empowerment conceptualisation into the research on political representation

and gender norms, also moves the analysis away from Eurocentric presumptions of liberal democratic context and away from dichotomies of the public/political and private/social. It embraces the intersectional identities that shape the perceptions of women in politics and the ideal articulations of the FPEs, to match the intersectional nature of the students' own lived realities.

Writing and Knowledge Production

The implications of the intersectional, decolonial feminist approaches (Lewis, 2016; Pailey, 2016; Oloruntoba, 2015; Mama, 2007) on writing this thesis are several, and include a concerted effort to engage with research written by women of colour, African scholars and scholars based in Africa and to draw on knowledge captured in non-peer reviewed sources, such as newspapers, blogs or popular media platforms, such as the Conversation or the South African Daily Maverick, a frequently used news portal, where key public figures share their opinions and analyses. Most crucially, however, I extensively quote the female participants to recognise their voice and agency. The vocabulary that is used throughout the thesis attempts to capture the tone and style of the students, be it through the use of South African English words such as 'yah', 'neh,' 'eish' or 'varsity' to refer to university, and 'matric' for high school matriculation certificate, or including phrases in other languages, if they were used by the students, such as *yebo*, meaning yes in Zulu. In the quotations I also use italics to designate the original emphasis or excitement in the voice of the student during our conversations, and include sounds and noises, such laughs, claps and 'kiss-teeth' – a linguistic gesture of sucking air through your teeth (Patrick and Figueroa, 2002) – because they are forms of communication and relay important contextual information such as contempt, judgement or disapproval. Grammatical errors made by both the students and myself are also kept in the quotes.

The extensive use of the students' voice has had two main implications for the research. Firstly, the students used terms for their familial ties that might not necessarily correspond to the assumed point of reference for a reader from the global North. The students across cultural, racial and class backgrounds used the

same terms such as parents, siblings, cousins, and children as they fit into their different worlds and hence, they refer to different kind of persons or blood ties. Therefore, some students called their biological aunts their mothers, and family friends their aunties; their cousins were referred to as their sisters/brothers, or their step/half-parents where called their parents. Untangling the relationships is not of importance for the research, and hence, the terms are not clarified throughout the thesis, but embraced as used by the students.

In the thesis I use the term 'Black African', to recognise that some students identified as Black, others as African, and yet others as Black African, Black South African, and Native African. At times, I refer collectively to Black African, Indian/Asian and Coloured students as Black as it is often done in the literature tied to Black Consciousness and Pan-African thought. This use of the term 'Black' is in some literature substituted by designation 'non-white;' however, in order to avoid centralising whiteness, I choose to use the term Black, acknowledging, however, that not all of my participants, whether Indian/Asian or Coloured, would understand themselves and their lived experiences through this prism of Blackness, primarily because they feel that the oppression or pain that is associated with being Black African differs from their lived experiences. Additionally, some students also identified as mixed-race or specified a particular ethnic/cultural group within the broader racial category. Many students also chose not to identify with any race or specified racial group that is ascribed to them. Therefore, when sharing the students' individual stories, I respect their self-identification choices and their language. In other words, I disclose the race of individual students in the terms of their preference or do not reference it at all, which may at times cause confusion to the reader; however, it inadvertently transmits the sense of contestation that permeates South African society.

Throughout the thesis I write Black with upper case B as an expression of solidarity with the political efforts of those activists, who seek to change the negative values and political exclusion, which were ascribed to their Black racial identity by the capitalist, patriarchal, colonial and apartheid regimes, and which

have been used to disempower and dehumanise them. Based on this logic, I equally refer to Coloureds with upper case C, while using white with lower case w. I also insert myself into the thesis as a narrator and share my experiences in an ethnographic style to continuously remind the reader of the power that I as the author possess over the discourses and analyses that form this thesis and that my own positionality shaped the data-gathering processes.

Research Limitations

In addition to the aforementioned limitation stemming from my research focus on a single university, there are several additional limitations that must be acknowledged. Firstly, the use of snowballing for participant recruitment based out of the Sociology Department resulted in the majority of the participants being students in the Faculty of Humanities. Although they pursued degrees in a variety of subjects, including Business, Marketing, Accounting, or Corporate Communications, there were no students in technical fields such as Engineering or natural and financial sciences. Most of the students who volunteered to participate were intrinsically interested in the topic of FPEs and studying in the Humanities Faculty, the students may have more interest in social issues and hence a higher propensity to express care for others or have specific expectations of political elites, which might differ from their peers in other subjects. Nonetheless, as I reveal in Chapter Five, when discussing the career and education choices made by the participants, many did not read subjects they had wanted to pursue and hence their studies were out of sync with their self-perceptions. Moreover, several students did not participate out of interest in politics, but they participated merely out of curiosity or as a favour. This suggests some potential mitigation of the presumed typology of students based on their degrees.

My deliberate reliance on students' voices, mentioned in the preceding section, also resulted in the frequent invisibility and omission of certain peoples from the discussion. Many of the students' narratives, reflecting the wider societal debates, approach power relationships in South Africa as struggles between Black Africans and whites, and/or the rich and the poor. Other peoples, identities

and bodies are thus missing in the analysis, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) individuals and differently abled people, while some, such as Indian/Asian and Coloured South Africans are often less visible as they should be. Their neglect in my participants' considerations of power meant that our interviews and the subsequent analysis of this thesis at times mirrors this invisibility.

Although this research strives to adopt feminist decolonial methodologies, it falls short of this objective in several ways. Firstly, the research is not directly or deliberately transformative of the socio-political structures or empowering of the individual female participants, as many decolonial feminist scholars suggest research should be (Darder, 2018; Smith, 2012; Wickramasinghe, 2010). While the overarching contribution of the research is within the discourses on political representation and empowerment, the research itself does not directly contribute to political and social activism and change. As it was suggested earlier, some participants found the engagement in the research empowering by the virtue of gaining a voice. As I will demonstrate in Chapter Eight, it provided them the opportunity to discuss issues of politics and South African society with authority, which some of them had felt intimidated about, or had believed they were not equipped to do. As I appreciated their inputs and fully accepted their views, positioning myself as an attentive, non-judgemental listener (Liong, 2015; Conway, 2008; Ortiz, 2005) many students took advantage of this opportunity to assert themselves as knowledge holders on a subject that they presumed was outside of their expertise. However, besides the individual level change in some instances, the research is unable to deliver change in the daily realities of the students.

Secondly, the research design process was not participatory and although it was significantly shaped to build on the students' realities and voice, it was not devised by/with the students and for the students (Smith, 2012). The thesis in a shortened form, be it as articles, reports or policy briefs, will be shared with all research participants, with whom I have been in touch periodically since having left South Africa. Moreover, the students were encouraged to provide ongoing

feedback in the thesis production; however, none of the students took the opportunity to engage beyond the FGDs or the interviews.

Thirdly, the thesis is focused on the examination of the position of women in the 21st century South Africa. It is contextualised and historicised through the analysis of the legacies of the apartheid regime, which in turn is understood as a continuation of the white settler colonial project in the Southern African region. However, the pre- apartheid colonialism and the early apartheid histories are not dealt with in detail. They are inherent in the debates on Blackness, African/Black culture, community and belonging; and with regards to gender norms and women's position of power and political leadership, they feature mostly in the debates on traditional elites, including several queens and female chiefs.

The analysis of social affairs and political developments in the thesis ends in December 2017 with the ANC presidential conference. While many important political changes have occurred in South Africa since then, they are outside of the purview of this thesis.

Lastly, the sole use of English, instead of other languages of students' preference, is a limitation for this research because of the study's decolonial ambitions. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (2005) underscores that decolonisation is a process of remembering the knowledge that was erased from the colonised subjects through linguisticides, and hence the dismantling of the metaphysical empire is achieved through the use of African languages and assigning them worth in academic spaces (wa Thiong'o, 2017). During a series of lectures for South African university students in March 2017, wa Thiong'o encouraged the students to embrace their mother languages as an act of empowerment (2017) and he captured the tensions young educated Black African people experience between the call to use African languages as an act of decolonisation and the desire to master English as a tool of social mobility. The decision to use English for this study is thus inherently part of the wider power debates in the South African academic setting. However, as students at UJ speak English and are thus able to express themselves directly, I decided to use English as a cost-effective

compromise between losing some of the meaning and richness of the students' mother tongues on one hand and using a third-party translator on the other.

3 Contextualising Power in South Africa: Gender, Race, Class and Age

Introduction

This chapter provides an explanatory note on the conditions of the social order in South Africa and contextualises some of the key debates that surrounded young women and womanhood in 2016 and 2017. Using episodes and actors that emerged during my data collection, both nationally and locally at UJ as examples, I sketch the structures, which shaped the experiences and perceptions of my participants, especially gender, race, class and age.

I argue that the situation in South Africa is characterised by high prevalence of distrust or suspicion, which arise in response to historical and ongoing abuse of power, inequality and political, social and economic change. The first source of this distrust and related uncertainty is the system of corruption and patronage that is maintained by the ruling ANC, but which permeates political institutions more broadly. The gendered impact of this political system is shown on the example of the ANC Women's League (WL). Secondly, I show how the notions of toxic masculinity and submissive femininity are building blocks of the debates surrounding the violence perpetuated by the state and the universities against young women and men, which are yet another facet of the abuse of power. The gerontocratic character of the social order is then shown on the government policies and approaches to the youth.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of the role of experience and empathy as sources of knowledge and understanding within this context of distrust, high inequality and social change. It is the preference for experience as an authentic and legitimate way of knowing that shapes the students' views on power and political representation and thus underpins the rest of the analysis of female political elites.

Politics of Patronage and Corruption

According to Afrobarometer polls (Lekalake, 2017; 2015a; 2015b) corruption has become the key societal concern for South Africans and one of the top problems in the country. In 2016/2017 rampant corruption was predominantly associated with the two presidencies of Jacob Zuma, who became the president of the ANC in 2007 at the party conference in the town of Polokwane, and who consequently became the country's president in the 2009 national elections. Zuma retained both the party and the country presidency for a second term and his time in office became synonymous with conspicuous 'politics of the belly'¹³ and led to his high level of unpopularity amongst many South Africans. Yet corruption and patronage have been a structural issue in the country since before the democratic transition in the 1990s and existed both during apartheid as well as throughout the democratic presidencies of Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki and Kgalema Motlanthe who proceeded Jacob Zuma.

The decades-long popular political support of the ANC and its unopposed dominance that was ushered in with the 1994 elections, led to the blurring of lines between the state and the party. This has created a sense that the state is a resource at the party's disposal (Dawson, 2014a; Plaut, 2014; von Holdt, 2013). The practice of 'cadre deployment,' including of top party National Executive Committee (NEC) members to the cabinet, created a culture of exploiting state resources through the party for personal advancement. Thus, as politicians wish to gain access into public offices and maintain their positions, their allegiance and accountability lies with the party leadership or the faction in power, rather than the citizens. This culture has stifled internal and external debates and led many politicians to toe the party line in pursuit of self-interest (Southall, 2017; Gouws, 2011; Southall, 2003).

¹³ The term was made prominent in African studies by Jean François Bayart and it is used to denote the tendency of those in power to use their positions to 'feed' on state resources to accumulate wealth and to distribute them to others to maintain power (qtd. in Cornwall, Robins and von Lieres, 2011, 10). Hence, it is connected to corruption, patronage, and wealth within the context of the state.

The patronage-based system in the ANC operates under the guise of party unity and cooperation. The pressure on ANC members to present a united front is a continuation of the ANC's apartheid era tactics of secrecy and strict discipline, which was a survival tactic against the persecution by the apartheid state (Gqola, 2015; Gumede, 2015). However, as issues and problems are forced to be dealt with inside the party and not in the open, public accountability is compromised, making this approach unsuitable for a political party within a democratic political system. An illustrative example of this unity and discipline discourse was the case of a female MP, Dr Makhosi Khoza, who served as the head of the parliamentary committee on public service and administration. She caught media attention due to threats that she had received for her oversight visits at several medical facilities, which revealed maladministration in public institutions (Khoza, 2017). Her profile then skyrocketed after she openly criticised President Jacob Zuma and the party leadership, went against the Chief Whip of the ANC caucus in Parliament, and voted in favour of a no confidence motion against President Zuma.¹⁴ She was branded as an ill-disciplined member and became one of the most visible MPs, who voted with the opposition on this motion. She was stripped of her committee chair role and eventually left the party, claiming that the ANC under the corrupt and illegitimate leadership was no longer the ANC that she had joined (Herman, 2017a; Khoza, 2017; Lowman, 2017). Khoza's story thus embodies the long history of discipline and unity related policing within the ANC and the public image of widespread corruption that it contributes to.

The ANC-led governments have also used the discourses of discipline and unity to articulate what a responsible South African citizen should be like and to demarcate the spaces for participation. Responsible citizens are meant to act and work in cooperation with the party and under its structures, rather than through

¹⁴ The vote of no confidence took place in August 2017, which President Zuma withstood. It emerged as a response to the April 2017 changes in the cabinet, and especially the replacement of then Minister of Finance Pravin Gordhan, who enjoyed a popular image of the last beacon of fight against corruption in the government. The reshuffle that President Zuma orchestrated in the middle of the night to the surprise of many in his party and the public at large caused major response in the general public, civil society, and opposition political parties. It led to mass demonstrations in metropolises and urban centres, which were hailed to be the largest since the end of apartheid and ultimately led to the vote of no confidence (Runciman, Nkuna and Frassinelli, 2017).

outside means such as protests, especially those that are claimed to be violent (Mills, 2016; Brown, 2015). According to many politicians, the rise of the democratic state opened new channels of engagement which meant that violent disruptions lost their apartheid-era legitimacy, when the struggle tactic was to make South Africa, and townships in particular, ungovernable. Moreover, the ANC continues to build on its historical narratives, which presented the party and Black people as one, in order to create an image of the ANC as the vanguard responsible for the country's successful democratic transition and the sole proprietor of the post-apartheid development and achievements (Brooks, 2017). Civic and political activism and protests outside of the ANC have thus been partially delegitimised (Selmeczi, 2015; Ballard et al., 2006). The Fallist protests, for example, were often attacked this way. Their critics argued that the students lacked an understanding of the difficulties of delivering the promised post-apartheid transformation and thus showed their youthful impatience. They also lacked the understanding of the new, democratic context, which made their protest tactics inappropriate and obsolete. In other words, Fallist opponents argued that the change of socio-political circumstances created formal, ANC/state managed channels for voicing grievances (Luescher, Loader and Mugume, 2017).

The need for the ANC to rely on the discourses of unity and discipline, combined with the calls for citizens to be patient with the transformation processes, has increased with the rising dissatisfaction of many people with the slow pace of post-apartheid improvements of their daily lives and with service delivery in certain communities in particular (Akinboade, Mokwena and Kinck, 2014; von Holdt, 2013; Piper and Nadvi, 2010; Mirafab, 2006). The 2016 municipal election losses for the ANC in major metros (Johannesburg, Pretoria and Nelson Mandela Bay) and the 2017 waves of anti-Zuma protests demonstrate the extent of the rising challenge to the party's legitimacy. Consequently, the well-established strategy of conflating the activities of the state and the party were failing to deliver the positive image for the ANC in 2016-2017, forcing the anti-Zuma faction of the ANC to try and salvage the party's reputation by attempting to distance the party from the government and certain individuals. The ANC

faction led by then Vice-President (VP) Cyril Ramaphosa, Lindiwe Sisulu (Minister of Human Settlement) and Gwede Mantashe (Secretary General), argued that despite the allegations of state capture and corruption, the ANC as a whole was able to reform itself because the values and ideas of the party remained good. It was just certain individuals inside and outside of the party who corrupted the ANC members and who were threatening the party's revolutionary mission. Despite some attempts to separate the ANC from the corruption of Zuma presidencies, the president managed to maintain enough support within the party to stay in office until the ANC party conference in December 2017, when the new leadership was elected. Moreover, the pressures on the party to remain united as the conference was approaching were intensified by the lessons from past leadership contestations, which led to the splintering of factions into opposition parties, including Congress of the People (COPE) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF).

The ANC had previously succeeded in diminishing claims of systematic corruption by sacrificing individuals, especially on the local level, where the pressures from the citizens were most acutely felt (Goebel, 2011; Alexander, 2010; Bénit-Gbaffou, 2008). However, with the rising accusations and evidence of the extent to which the graft was structural rather than an individual anomaly, the distrust of the whole political system rather than individuals was growing. The opposition fuelled this viewpoint by arguing that graft was so deeply entrenched in the ANC that it was beyond the point of no return (de Villiers, 2017). Thandeka Gqubule captures this widespread societal sentiment of mistrust and suspicion tied to corruption when she describes the impact that Thuli Madonsela, whose reports revealed much of this corruption, had during her time in office. She writes, "Madonsela's gift [the Nkandla report] to the country was costly: bequeathing it took investment in her courage, determination, flair, the constitutionally bestowed powers of her office, and the altruism of her team. In a country where political culture had *rendered truth precious and rare*, her gift was priceless" [my emphasis] (2017, 169).

The Nkandla scandal is one of many high-profile cases that demonstrate the betrayal of trust vested in the political establishment. Students often spoke about politicians pretending to take action that would bring positive changes to the people and hence they claimed that political elites were faking their commitment to changing the country. Sinqobile was a Black student who lived at home with her mother, who was a cleaner. She was a pro-active go-getter from a township in Gauteng: she was involved in various on-campus activities and as she explained, although she did not know much about politics, she hoped there might be something that came out of her participation in the research, because she believed that one never knew what doors such engagement could open. She was convinced that in order to succeed and to get ahead in South Africa, she had to be active, knock on doors and ask for things. For example, she had gone to the ANC offices to ask for money for her studies, which she never received despite having been promised by a member of the local branch. Moreover, she believed that the ANC government only pretended to push for women's empowerment and paid lip service to women's equality, because if they genuinely cared, they would "empower the women to have equal rights and ... to stop hate crimes, to stop rape and to stop those forms of inequalities that hinder the women." It must be underscored that other political parties were similarly distrusted by many citizens, with party membership and cross-racial perceptions representing important factors affecting this distrust.

The perceptions of the entire political system consequently shaped the students' views of the ANC WL, which was expected to be a gender-aware, women-focused political actor, which I analyse in the next section.

The Patriarchal Complacency of the ANC Women's League

The ANC WL has positioned itself as the dominant political voice on gender equality in the country. The ANC overall has built a relatively positive image in matters of gender equality, particularly in the international domain, because of gender equality provisions in the constitution, such as the commitment to non-sexism or the creation of gender state machinery in the form of various oversight bodies. The 50-50 gender quota rule for the party's NEC is another, oft-cited

measure that feeds the party's gender-equality narrative, which is perpetuated despite the fact that Jessie Duarte was the only woman holding one of the top six leadership roles in late 2017.

While the WL was certainly an important actor in contributing towards gender equality provisions in the country and the party, the League was part of a broader campaign led by the National Women's Coalition (NWC), consisting of civil society organisations, academics and feminist activists (Meintjes, 2017; Hassim, 2014a; Gouws, 2011). Studies show that strong, *independent* women's movements that resisted co-optation by dominant political forces were able to achieve favourable results for women on the continent (Tripp and Badri, 2017; Berger, 2014; Viterina and Fallon, 2008). The NWC was one such voice in South Africa; however, it dissipated after the democratic transition as many activists joined formal political structures with the first parliamentary elections under the auspices of the ANC. Consequently, the ANC WL became the self-positioned primary voice of Black African women in the country for many years. However, some feminist activists continue to challenge this notion, as I suggested in Chapter Two, and attack the ANC WL for its track record as well as broader ideological standpoints.

As in many other liberation and anti-colonial movements on the continent, women activists in and around the ANC and its allies had to fight their male comrades to bring gender equality onto the political agenda. This was often the case based on false reasoning that fighting colonial-racial oppression came before addressing gender inequality and required unity of purpose amongst all fighters and hence issues of gender oppression were seen as a distraction. As a result of this mindset and the patriarchal nature of the movement, women in the struggle had to withstand various forms of oppression, ranging from silencing of their opinions to direct sexual violence. As Redi Tlhabi (2017), Pumla Gqola (2015) and others show, it was not only the female fighters and struggle activists themselves, but also the wives and daughters of male activists and fighters, and ordinary South African women that bore the brunt of the violence by the men in the movement, and of the state apparatus. Despite the end of the anti-apartheid

struggle, women and men in South African politics (including members of advocacy groups and other CSOs) face considerable physical danger, especially on the municipal level. Competition between ANC factions for control over political positions and thus over power and economic opportunities, frequently leads to the killings of opponents. The political killings in KZN in 2017 resulted in the establishment of the Moerane Commission of Inquiry, which sought to examine the underlying practices that lead to such violence (du Plessis, 2017a). In addition to the threats to their lives, female politicians face sexist attacks from their male colleagues. Rebecca Davis (2017b), a feminist commentator, highlights several cases that have occurred in the National Assembly during Zuma presidencies, including attacks on DA's Phumzile van Damme, who was called a "straat meid" (translated to imply a sex worker) by a fellow MP during her response to the president's 2017 State of the Nation Address (SONA).

With the entrenchment of the party-state, the women of the ANC also became incorporated into the system of patronage and corruption (Gouws and Hassim, 2014; Hassim, 2014b; Makhunga, 2014). According to Lyn Snodgrass (2017), their collaboration with the political system can be seen as Deniz Kandiyoti's "patriarchal bargain" (1988), which suggests that some women benefit from being part of the system, as it gives them comparatively more power and privilege over others. Leading South African feminist, Patricia McFadden, has captured a similar critique as follows:

The upward mobility of a small clique of Black women who fought ferociously to retain their middle-class status and the material wealth associated with gendered mainstreaming is one of the most significant expressions of the demise of gendered nationalist organizing (2018, 424).

The most illustrative example of the patriarchal bargain and neglect of feminist politics of the ANC WL can be seen in the League's responses to highly publicised cases of sexual violence against women. On one side of the spectrum is the case of Fezekile Ntsukela Kuzwayo (Khwezi), in which the WL and other supporters of the accused rapist Jacob Zuma viciously attacked Fezekile. Instead of siding with her – a victim who stood up to one of the most powerful men in the country, who

had also been her family's friend and an elder – many ANC women of the struggle era whom Fezekile knew from childhood in exile, vilified her (Tlhabi, 2017; Gouws, 2016b, 2010). The polar opposite of the spectrum to Fezekile was Reeva Steenkamp, who was killed by her famous partner, athlete Oscar Pistorius in 2013. Pistorius, a white male with no ties to the ANC or politics more broadly, was met with the full wrath of the League, whose members sat with Steenkamp's family during the court hearings (Gouws, 2016b; The Citizen Reporter, 2015; Molewa, 2014). As these responses suggest, the organisation works with men in power within the main ANC, rather than taking a critical stance against them.

Based on a survey from 2002, Gouws and Kotzé (2007, 175) found that South African female MPs were concerned with issues of gender equality and held more liberal views than their male counterparts on such women's issues as abortion or birth control. Due to the small sample, the authors did not generalise whether the values of female MPs suggest a future rise of feminist politics. In light of the patronage, nepotism and corruption within the ANC and the patriarchal nature of the party structures, it is clear that the ANC WL and most female MPs should not be expected to be a loud, feminist critical voice against the ANC. However, the ANC WL's post-apartheid bargain must also be seen within a longer historical trajectory of the ANC. Already during the struggle, many women participated in building a culture of silence that prevented women from challenging their fellow comrades and demanding justice over issues of GBV.

Many feminist writers suggest that cooperation and consensus building rather than confrontation between men and women are a feature of a particular version of Afro-feminism tied to the concept of Ubuntu (which I discuss in more depth in Chapters Six and Eight) and which foregrounds the community rather than the individual. Within these African and Neco-feminist¹⁵ traditions, motherhood is also seen as a source of empowerment for African women. Thus, these feminists articulate a form of feminist thought and practice as a critical response to some

¹⁵ Obioma Nnaemeka (2004) explains Neco-feminism as African feminism in opposition to western, liberation feminism because it is firstly based on negotiation and consensus finding and because it is 'no-ego,' showing that women's concerns are about helping others, rather than oneself.

western liberal feminisms, which patronise African women (Mama, 2017; Win, 2017; Steady, 2005; Nnaemeka, 2004). It is questionable, whether the ANC WL could be understood in these terms because of the policies that it advocates and methods it utilises. It has pursued so-called motherist politics, which was historically demonstrated by its framing of women's role in the struggle and in the society as mothers and carers. It mobilised and recruited women to work alongside the ANC to protect their children and to create for them a better future and hence worked within patriarchal African nationalism (Walker, 1995). The critique of the ANC WL thus stems from some feminists who challenge gender norms, which reduce women's societal contribution only to motherhood and reproductive social care within the household (Gouws, 2016b; Hassim 2014a, 2006b; Makhunga, 2014). Critiquing the ANC WL as a motherist organisation, however, is not a devaluation of motherhood or politics of cooperation as articulated by Afro/Nego-feminists. It serves to highlight the WL as defenders of a particular kind of femininity, which pays lip service to challenging patriarchal gender norms of the main ANC body, and which works within the limitations of the main party structures (McFadden, 2018).

Toxic Masculinity and Submissive Femininity

Gender discourses in South African politics and society are underpinned by two key relational themes: the crisis of masculinity and girls' empowerment, both of which entail role models as an important element. Crisis of masculinity or toxic masculinity is a widespread area of research and debate due to the high levels of GBV in the country. This research and public discourse suggest that toxic masculinity, meaning masculinity based on domination and violence, is one of the key reasons behind sexual violence and is connected to epidemics of HIV/AIDS (Jewkes et al., 2010). Studies such as by Morrell et al. (2016), Seekings (2014) and Goebel (2011) propose that many young men lack male role models or father figures in their lives, who could instil in them values of caring fatherhood or equality between intimate partners as part of the ideas of what it means to be a man. Hence, young men and women are exposed to patriarchal gender norms on masculinity that lead to harmful practices being transferred across generations. The story of my respondent Palesa, a Black student from

Gauteng, is a revealing manifestation of this impact. Palesa, who was in her second year of studies in 2017 and was not a member of any organisations or parties, described how she felt that a lot of her struggles in life were a result of her absent father, which led her to distrust men. Growing up the oldest of three siblings, she was responsible for various household chores from tender age and had to struggle to find food at times; she also witnessed her mother being dismissed at various jobs because of the lack of official certificates. In addition to father absenteeism and growing up in female-headed households, exposure to violence against women and men also contributes to toxic masculinity. Both of these factors are rooted in the history of structural and physical violence of the colonial, racist, patriarchal apartheid regime and the transitional period, as well as migrant labour and spatial segregation (Tlhabi, 2017; Gqola, 2015; Stauffer, 2015).

Most of the post-apartheid explanations of toxic masculinity are linked to neoliberalism and the associated high levels of unemployment or precarious livelihoods, which hinder men in meeting the expectations of being protectors and providers, or household-heads more broadly (Buiten and Naidoo, 2016; Enderstein and Boonzaier, 2015; Stauffer, 2015). As one of my male Black African participants expressed it, “No one has it as tough as a Black man!” because, as he argued, Black African men like him were not desirable for marriage, because they did not have anything to offer to women of his age in comparison to white men. This means that many young men are not able to reach social markers of adult masculinity, such as marriage, because they cannot afford to pay for the wedding or in some communities to pay *lobola*, the bride price or ‘damages’.¹⁶

The masculinity discourses tend to portray toxic masculinity in singular, universal terms. However, it must be recognised that it is primarily the Black

¹⁶ Paying damages refers to a practice amongst some Black African peoples such as Xhosa and Sesoto, when a man pays the family of a woman with whom he has a child out of wedlock. As Mkhwanazi and Block explain, “This was often a one-time payment of cows or the cash equivalent. The payment of damages accords paternal recognition and lineal belonging – meaning that the child would care for that ancestral line – and allows for the possibility of patrilocal care” (2016, 274).

African masculinity that is associated with the ideas of toxicity, crisis and GBV (Dube, 2016), which shows its racist, colonial underpinnings. The nuances between different types of masculinities, as mediated by race, class and sexuality, and their implications on the questions of hegemony and power within a racialised and economically unequal society, tend to be neglected. For example, Dosekun (2013) finds that amongst her research participants, who were UCT female students, rape was perceived as a Black African issue, which reflected the pervasive, dangerous racialised myth within South African society (Gqola, 2015). Many authors, including Buiten and Naidoo (2016), Dube (2016), Ratele (2014) and Vincent (2006), warn against these homogenising tendencies that are in the public domain and in some research, and highlight the tensions and contradictions that exist amongst various masculinities.

The fallacy of the violent, toxic masculinity being racialised as Black African is well substantiated by an incident that caught media attention in March 2017 and that took place at a Spur restaurant. This incident, captured on video and spread across social and mainstream media, was a confrontation between a white father and a Black African mother. The video shows the father, a man of strong build, yelling at the mother in front of their children, other patrons and employees. Getting increasingly aggressive and potentially violent, the man nearly flips a table and assaults the mother, while she stands up to him. The incident had widespread repercussions because the franchise, apologizing to the mother, banned the man from its establishments. It further sought to create a panel of experts to look into measures that could prevent such incidents at their spaces from repeating. While praised by many, representatives of the key Afrikaans civil society organisations, such as AfriForum and its affiliated trade union Solidarity, encouraged the Afrikaner community to boycott the chain, because they argued the restaurant's actions were anti-Afrikaner. The boycott led to a decline in company's revenues and pushed its management to cancel the panel (Abbas, 2017; du Toit, 2017; van Tonder, 2017). The incident thus reveals the neglect and disregard of white masculinities and the racist/racialised nature of gender debates in the country.

The discourses tied to the above-mentioned notions of toxic masculinity correspond with discourse of subservient, submissive femininity, or what Jewkes and Morrell (2012) termed “conservative femininity,” and vulnerability, especially amongst Black African young women and girls (Graham, 2016; Dworkin et al., 2012). This iteration of Black African and Coloured femininity is argued to limit the aspirations of young women and girls, causing marriage and/or motherhood to be seen as a woman’s key role and resulting in teenage pregnancies and high drop-out rates from school (Marteleto, Lam and Ranchhod, 2008). Consequently, the government has sought to empower girls by encouraging them to stay in education and to consider maths, sciences and other fields of study that are typically branded as male-dominated, not least by promoting successful female role models. Hence, while the young women’s empowerment debates are embedded within the sphere of sexuality, motherhood and reproductive health, there is a clear economic dimension to them. As the masculinity crisis is linked to high unemployment, weak economic performance, and the capitalist labour exploitation, femininity debates focus on pushing more women into education and STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) to make them economically more productive in those sectors of the economy that are seen as future drivers of the knowledge, IT and service-based economy, rather than in sectors such as agriculture, mining or manufacturing that are the current pillars of the faltering economy.

During my data collection there were several prominent campaigns and incidents which raised the issue of young women’s vulnerabilities. An illustrative case is the murder of a young Black African woman, Karabo Mokoena (eNCA, 2017c; 2017d). The version of her story presented by the media portrays her as repeatedly abused by her boyfriend, an investment trader, living in Sandton, one of the richest suburbs of Johannesburg. Karabo did not leave the abusive relationship despite the warning of her family and friends, which some leading female politicians, such as Susan Shabangu, then Minister for Women in the South African Presidency, as well as Social Development Minister and the president of the ANC WL at the time, Bathabile Dlamini, linked to young women and girls’ vulnerability and attraction to material things (News24, 2017).

Shabangu's statement in particular caused an outcry, when she suggested that Karabo was weak inside while appearing strong, which was interpreted as her blaming the victim. However, Shabangu later explained that she had meant that Karabo was vulnerable (Herman, 2017b).

Narratives of toxic masculinities and women's vulnerability are merged in Karabo's story. The account grabbed the public attention also because at the time, her story seemed to come after a string of many cases of GBV, from rapes of minors to intimate partner violence. Some feminist activists launched a social media hashtag #MenAreTrash and subsequently a #NotInMyName campaign led by 'woke' men arose in response, allegedly to show some men's disapproval of GBV. The latter campaign pushed men to take a stand against toxic masculinity and model different behaviour (eNCA, 2017a; News24, 2017; Rupiah, 2017; Samanga, 2017). One of the leading GBV academics, Lisa Vetten, mentioned at the time that the society should push forward alternative male role models to address the problem. She suggested men like the anti-apartheid struggle icon, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, whose behaviour shows that men can be vulnerable and emotional (qtd. in Davis, 2017a). Hence, women's vulnerability debates have worked in conjunction with toxic masculinity narratives, leading to the conclusion that more role models countering the hegemonic gender norms are needed for both young men and women. However, only a limited number of initiatives and programmes, for example MenEngage run by an NGO Sonke Gender Justice, address masculinities and male role models.

Violence against Women and Black Bodies in HE

As the previous section underscores, violence against women is an everyday reality for women in South Africa, and for Black, poor women in particular, including in the university setting (Singh, Mudaly and Singh-Pillay, 2015; Dosekun, 2013; Gordon and Collins, 2013; Clowes et al., 2009). This has been reflected in my interviews, as violence, and GBV in particular, was on the minds of my participants and shaped their choices and experiences in and around their varsity life. For example, many would prefer to live in on-campus residences in order to avoid the commute to campus using public transport, the so-called taxis,

which are notoriously dangerous both due to the poor road safety and because the sector is dominated by male-run cartels and lacks proper state control and supervision. This leads for example to frequent sexual abuse and harassment at taxi ranks. Moreover, it was a frequent occurrence to see student posts on Twitter or Facebook pleading for help with locating young women who had been taken into strangers' cars just outside the University gates. The posters feared that these women had been kidnapped and/or raped. High prevalence of 'smash and grab' also posed dangers for those wealthier students driving to campus. More violent crime was also part of the UJ landscape. For example, Kelvin Baloyi, a UJ student, was shot allegedly by an off-duty security guard at a party at his accommodation (Kubheka, 2016; Abdulla, 2016) and there was an armed robbery at APK, when students working in a computer lab were robbed of their laptops, tablets and other devices at gunpoint (Canca, 2016).

Many of my participants expressed their disappointment and anger with the University's failure to ensure the safety of students, and female students in particular. Fallists criticised the university management for employing security staff, the so-called 'bouncers,' and devoting significant resources to police the protesting students, while at the same time failing to protect women from perpetrators of sexual violence and other crimes, including their fellow students. The presence of bouncers is one of the many manifestations of securitisation of campuses in South Africa that has been intensified during the course of FMF protests. The university management argued that security staff was meant to protect the health and safety of its staff and the 'other' students (University of Johannesburg, 2017c). However, the bouncers themselves reportedly intimidated and harassed the students, and hence, the staff that was meant to protect them, were some of the perpetrators of sexual violence (Schutte and Singiswa, 2016). This securitisation was seen at many other institutions, as VCs brought private security companies and SAPS to their campuses to help 'manage' the threat of protesting students. However, UJ was particularly seen as a university ruled with an iron fist, where any protest and dissent were squashed through intimidation and force.

The UJ management's approach to securitisation functioned firstly by surveillance and secondly by direct force. Some of the overt surveillance¹⁷ methods included members of UJ protection services (public safety department) video-recording protesters in order to gather evidence for disciplinary proceedings. This evidence facilitated their suspensions, thus removing 'trouble makers' from campuses and preventing their further activism. The covert operations were compared by some students to the apartheid state actions against the banned ANC in exile, which they explained by the VC's personal experience in the student anti-apartheid struggle. Some student activists shared with me stories of jammed Wi-Fi signal and intercepted communication lines, and having the management refer to their private phone conversations with fellow students during questioning. A documentary report produced by an investigative TV show Checkpoint (eNCA, 2017b) further revealed that the university placed undercover security guards posing as students onto buses which ran between UJ campuses. These security guards would report on their overheard student conversations on protest plans in order to prevent them from occurring. Direct force was also utilised, especially at several protest gatherings, when the police were called in to reinforce the private security personnel. As UJ professor Jane Duncan showed, the police units that were mobilised, such as the tactical team, were inadequate and inappropriate to deal with student protesters (@duncanjane, 2016). Moreover, as she argues, most of the student protests were disruptive rather than violent in nature – a distinction that the university management, as well as the wider public and political leaders did not seek to make (Duncan, 2016).

The fear of the police and the security services amongst many UJ students was palpable. Several students told me that they avoided coming to campus during protests, explaining in a semi-joking way that they did not want to die. While some were referring to fearing the chaos that often accompanied the protests, students running through corridors for example, others insinuated the inappropriate use of force by the security services. I attended one protest

¹⁷ These extra-ordinary security measures were put in place on top of already present and normalised surveillance, which includes the use of fingerprint scanners and ID cards or the inspection of car boots at campus entry checkpoints.

gathering where students screamed and fled the scene as a row of a dozen security officers with helmets, batons and protective shields approached the meeting place. Although the officers did not engage with the students on that particular occasion, it was their mere presence that caused the fearful response. Cases of unrestrained use of force against UJ students also happened nonetheless; one such incident was captured by an independent journalist at the DFC campus in September 2016. In this incident, which later received some media attention (eNCA, 2016c), the students marched from APK to DFC in downtown Johannesburg as part of their disruptive protest strategy. Once they arrived, the bouncers who were meant to stop them from entering the university premises, chased the students away, followed them to a nearby petrol station, where they shoved them and beat them.

Many critics of Fallist activism did not appreciate the extent of the student concerns over the presence of security officers on campus. The historical legacy of distrust of the security apparatus and the persistent police brutality against Black bodies, however, help to explain the concerns of many Black African students for their safety (Faull, 2016; Kushner, 2015; Paret, 2015). The 2012 Marikana massacre is one of the most horrific examples of this violence, when the police shot 34 mine workers, who were protesting for better working conditions in the Lonmin operated mines in Rustenburg area of the North West province. The tragedy at Marikana became a symbol of the state's violence and of the lack of reform in policing from the apartheid era. It also showed the ANC's protection of business interests of the mining giants at the expense of the workers (Alexander, 2017; Benya, 2015; Gumede, 2015). The students' exposure to the events of Marikana and their understanding of the implied institutional treatment of Black African women and the poor, leads to the students' diminished trust in the political establishment. The distrust is further exacerbated by the patronising approaches to dealing with youth concerns and the lip service of the main political actors towards youth empowerment.

Youth as Policy-Making Objects

The ANC-led governments brought the growing young population of South Africans to policy focus with renewed vigour since the impacts of the 2008 financial crisis exacerbated youth frustrations with unemployment and the lack of post-apartheid transformation and resulted in the aforementioned student and youth protests (Booyesen, 2016). Policies and public debates on youth in South Africa have mirrored the debates across the African continent, where demographic trends of a growing or 'bulging' youth segment of the population pyramids are taking place. In 2016, nearly 20 million South Africans, or 36% of the population, were in the youth age bracket (Stats SA, 2017b, 32). Although this demographic segment grew at a slower rate than the country's average, high levels of unemployment (52% compared to the adult population of 31.6%) and the decline in absorption rates into the labour force, aggravate the concerns about the fate of the generation and the country as a whole (Stats SA, 2016b, 28).

The youth are thus seen as a potential 'demographic dividend' as they represent the future workforce and a potential threat to the social order because they are at risk of becoming unruly, radical, criminal and unproductive (Van Dijk et al., 2011; Boyce, 2006; Abbink, 2005; Diouf, 2003). In South Africa, the 21st century youth are therefore another potential 'lost generation' (as was the generation experiencing the height of apartheid violence and oppression) that is seen as not adopting working habits and democratic values, which creates a sense of moral panic in the country (Dawson, 2014b; Seekings, 2014; Comaroff and Comaroff, 2000; Seekings, 1996). Critics of Fallism have used the student protests to justify their warnings of youth becoming violence-prone, undemocratic and entitled (Everatt, 2016b; Hughes, 2016; Malala, 2016; Morrell, 2016; van der Westhuizen, 2016b). Others used it as a testimony that the disenchanted youth is not apolitical despite withdrawing from formal political participation, but it is critically engaged with questions of social justice and equality (Becker, 2016; Bosch, 2016; Hodes, 2017). These contradictory assessments of the South African youth are a result of the tendency to homogenise young South Africans through a generational lens (Higham, 2012) and as a Born-Free (BF) generation

in particular. The BF signifier is generally used to designate people who have lived most of their life after the 1994 democratic transition and/or were too young to experience much of the transition period, especially the violence between the ANC and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) (Mattes, 2012).¹⁸ Being Born-Free is often a positive descriptor, because it suggests that the young people belonging into this category, embody a dawn of a new era.

Many students embrace the youth label and identity in order to exercise their agency and to insert themselves as political agents. Van Dijk et al. (2011) suggest that youth identity can work similarly to an ideology, because it allows collectivization and a means to articulate claims to access power; thus, rallying around youth's generational identity arises as a logical response when facing marginalization. However, there are important differences amongst the youth, particularly along gender, class, and racial lines, which students do not disregard because they influence their lived experiences. For example, some studies (Seekings, 2014; Kamper, Badenhorst and Steyn, 2009; Boyce, 2006) find that young people, especially Black Africans with education, are optimistic about their future and have a positive vision for their lives despite seeing much wrong in South Africa. Conversely, Lauren Graham (2016) finds that Black African women who are 20-29 and are not in education or employment, are pessimistic about their future, seeing limited options afforded to them beyond motherhood – as a means of getting economic support from fathers of their children – and hustling, even if morally wrong. Hence, it is crucial to de-homogenise youth in order to identify policies and interventions which would address the root causes of inequality and marginalization.

Youth issues are, however, approached by the policy makers with limited substantive input from the young people themselves. While many politicians emphasise their commitment to strengthening the youth voice and advocate their increased participation, they often pay lip service to the idea of youth

¹⁸ A popular depiction of the democratic transition in South Africa from the apartheid regime portrays it as a peaceful process, and a successful, globally replicable case when a bloody civil war was averted. However, the transition period was a violent time with various lines of conflict and with many casualties as well as surviving victims.

power. The lack of young people's direct, meaningful inclusion has been extensively critiqued by activists such as Mark Heywood (2017) and academics, including Garman and Malila (2017) and Malila et al. (2013). My informants, Natasha, Pearl, and Rorisang, who worked for youth-development and empowerment NGOs, also mentioned that many young people feel there is no space for them amongst the old liberation struggle generation in power.¹⁹ Youth are treated as leaders of tomorrow, rather than leaders of today, meaning that their time to be decision-makers and influencers in positions of power will only come in the future, as their lack of lived experience means that they require advice and guidance from adults.

The aforementioned reflections from youth activists point to the narratives of age-based, inter-generational tensions that are clearly detectable in the South African policy spaces and that permeate this thesis. For example, June is dedicated as youth month in commemoration of the Soweto uprising of June 16, 1976, in which thousands of Black African students protested against the imposition of Afrikaans in schools and dozens were killed in response by the state. In June, therefore, more than at any other time during the year, politicians deliver speeches that recognise the importance of youth for the country, similarly to the month of August in the case of women. They invite and support youth engagement *now* to help shaping the country's *future* that they will inherit. However, historical events such as the Soweto uprising are hailed by the current generation in power as the ultimate benchmark of youth-activism. The older generation, who was involved in the struggle, ends up putting itself forward as the bearer of experience and knowledge, from which to learn. Hence, they arise as role models. Moreover, the voice of organisations, such as the Military Veterans Association of Umkhonto We Sizwe, the military wing of the ANC from the times of the anti-apartheid struggle, are separated from and sometimes pitched against the youth and women's voices through their corresponding representative bodies, the ANC YL and WL, as if there were no people who could

¹⁹ It should be recognised that this dynamics of age-based difference between the citizens and the political leaders is not only a feature of the South African political system, but many other post-colonial African settings, where the liberation leaders of advanced age continue to stay in power (Kiwuwa, 2015).

belong to multiple categories of ANC followers. Young womanhood is thus left as a problematic category that is everywhere and nowhere. This institutional approach also creates a challenge for the ANC WL to attract young Black African women into its midst, as a cursory glance at the most publicly visible WL figures does not show many women below 35, if any at all.

The tensions between the youth and the older generations of politicians from the ANC were used by the opposition to argue that their youth-commitment was substantially better than that of the ANC. The DA, for example, showcased some of its young MPs on their social media platforms in June 2017 as a sign of this commitment. One of the profiled politicians was the youngest MP, Hlomela Bucwa, who was 24 years old and a law student at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University at the time. Bucwa received media attention earlier in the year, when she delivered her 'maiden' speech in the National Assembly (Democratic Alliance, 2017). Similarly, the EFF were proud to boast about their youthful leadership, which made them very attractive to some young voters. Many of my participants mentioned the party's spokesperson Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, who was known under the nickname "people's bae," meaning people's babe, for his wits and good looks. At the age of 32, Ndlozi completed his doctorate in politics from Wits University in August 2017 and was hailed as a role model for young people, instead of the older generation of political elites in the ANC (Nkosi and Matangira, 2017; Javier, 2016).

A simplistic understanding of the experiences of young women and men in South Africa, as well the invisibility of some youth, is also demonstrated in the aforementioned discourses that pitch against each other toxic masculinity on the one hand and submissive femininity on the other. With the lack of a more nuanced, careful analysis, many potential solidarities inter- and intra-generationally get lost, which further diminishes trust building prospects in the country and weaken the chances of changing the status quo. These generational binaries and simplifications are strengthened by the tendencies of South Africans to take the end of apartheid as a point of historical rupture which to an extent artificially orientates all points of analysis and social organising. While the end of

apartheid is an important, positive historical caesura, approaching the end of the regime as a break-point can prevent long-term analyses and considerations of systematic and structural continuities across the eras and hence the creation of intersectional solidarities.

In such a context of social rupture, the ability and willingness of people to empathise across various societal groups – of those perceived to be empowered and disempowered – becomes questioned. Empathy, defined by Kimberly Chabot Davis as “‘perspective taking’ – imaginatively experiencing the feelings, thoughts and situation of another” (2004, 403), is met with scepticism if at all deemed possible, while direct experience offers a better chance of authentic representation of interests. Jane Mansbridge’s work on the importance of descriptive representation seems particularly applicable in this environment. In her seminal article Mansbridge (1999) argues that it is precisely in the contexts of high mistrust and historical marginalization of a particular population that descriptive representation can help to increase legitimacy of the political establishment. This logic is certainly prominent, as many students believe in the primacy of experience as a source of knowledge and understanding, as I discuss in the next section.

Primacy of Experience over Empathy

Lebo became one of my closest interviewees, with whom I met on several occasions to talk about her efforts to run a youth empowerment NGO. She was a Black student from a township in Gauteng in her second year of studies in 2016. She worked extremely hard to set up an organisation that sought to help young people in her community with accessing education and getting skills to alleviate poverty. She was able to live in a res on campus because of the bursary that she had received from the company, where her mother worked as an administrative help. Growing up in a household with many single women, she was shown the value of independence and non-reliance on others, although she said she had also grown up in a culture in which men were seen as the leaders. Taking her own money, the little that she had, she got the organisation off the ground and was working tirelessly with a few friends to organise events and to raise further

funds for programmes. She was also a member of some organisations at UJ, including a women's organisation, which, however, did not have much visibility on campus. When I asked her about cross-racial and cross-class empathy, she said:

Lebo: I really think that until you have been in someone's shoes, and you really get to know [them, you cannot represent them] ... Let me say, Steve Biko, Mandela, these people are Black people, you have been through a lot of struggles, that is why it was easy for them to represent Black people. Because they know what Black people go through on a daily basis. ... If you get fed milk every day, you get fed cheese²⁰ and every day you get 50 Rands just to go and buy lunch every day at school, trust me, ... you will only be able to sympathise, but you won't be empathetic enough.

Ján: You don't think you can be?

Lebo: ... The thing is, you will think you understand. I think these people think that they understand. And they think that, 'oh, yeah, these people are living in a hut, fine', but as long as you have not been in the situation yourself, I don't think you understand, honestly. That is why it's easier for these people [who have not experienced poverty] to say ... 'they're exaggerating the FeesMustFall', 'they're exaggerating this whole income thing', because they don't know how it feels like. They really don't know.

What Lebo expressed in our exchange was that direct *experience* was the ultimate source of knowledge; therefore, without being poor and Black African, white people cannot truly understand her predicaments. Put differently, the students recognise that it is impossible to experience other people's lives or as Sara Ahmed puts it in her writing on pain and the body, "it is because no one can know what it feels like to have my pain that I want loved others to acknowledge how I feel" (2014, 29).

If not from a direct personal experience, many students believed other Black Africans would be able to understand poverty through, for example, their

²⁰ Having cheese was taken as a sign of wealth and class amongst some Black Africans, which led to the rise of a negative, demeaning phrase 'cheeseboy' to ascribe privilege. As Phadi and Ceruti define it, "the cheeseboy was that boy at a township school who was envied and derided because his parents could afford to slip a wedge of processed cheese into his lunch box" (2011, 98). Together with other words that I discuss throughout the thesis, such as coconut, it forms part of the 'remembering discourse' that disciplines social mobility aspirations, and which is detailed in Chapter Eight.

extended families and hence to understand and represent their needs better. Eddie, an African student from a Gauteng township was in her second year in 2017, was not a member of any organisations when we met. As she put it:

That's where then the difference comes in. She [a rich Black woman] has the economical power, but she doesn't have those experiences [of life in a township]. But if she's told, I think then she would be able to relate, empathise more, because it's her tribe, it's her people. So, she would be able to understand even though she didn't necessarily go through it.

Eddie's statement suggests that the shared racialised experience creates better ability to empathise across class privilege, which is not as automatic for white people and people of other racial identifications. Within a similar mind-set, some of my interviewees believed that if white people in positions of power surrounded themselves with Black African people and genuinely listened to their experiences, they could undertake action that would improve their lives and the country as a whole. Hence, empathy was an import basis for being in the positions of political power and decision making, but it was not sufficient or equal to personal experience. Therefore, mistrust amongst people requires additional safeguards and precautions, which take the form of people who are perceived as having fewer hurdles to empathy and are closer to genuine understanding. Here again Sara Ahmed's work is insightful. She writes, "the ethical demand [of witnessing pain] is that I must act about that which I cannot know, rather than act insofar as I know. I am moved by what does not belong to me" (2014, 31). However, many students, empowered or disempowered, did not trust the powerful, including the people in political offices, to act empathetically.

Many students who were aware that their lives were different from their poor Black African peers, believed that spending some time in a township or going to visit people who lived in places different from their own, would give them that necessary knowledge and insights, even if they did not live through the particular experience. #FeesMustFall serves as a revealing example of the impact of the students' preference for experiential knowing. Several Fallists underscored to me that many UJ students lacked direct experience with the oppressive aspects of

the HE system, which resulted in their lukewarm support of the Fallist cause or their lack of participation in protests. Towards the end of the first semester in 2017, when not much Fallist organising was taking place, these activists told me that part of their reasoning behind withholding action at the time, was to allow students who were benefiting from NSFAS (National Student Financial Aid Scheme) and who believed that the HE system worked well, to live through experiences such as not being able to see their exam marks because of their outstanding debt. They believed that under this kind of experience, their anger would grow and would result in their support of #FeesMustFall.

Katleho's story substantiates this approach. When I met Katleho at a group discussion in 2016, she came across as a strong feminist. In the debate, she called for more women in politics and for a fight against patriarchy. She found inspiration in many strong women, including Helen Zille. She was a DA supporter and believed Mmusi Maimane, the leader of the DA at the time, represented the interests of her generation and worked towards an equal South Africa. She was living in the suburbs, with parents, both of whom had some formal education and were employed. When I tried to reconnect with Katleho in January 2017, she told me that she was not coming back to UJ because she could no longer afford the fees. She eventually managed to resume her studies and when we met several weeks later, she explained how her family unexpectedly got into financial difficulties, which caused her concerns over studies. Not having expected such situation to arise, she had not applied for NSFAS or bursaries. In the end, she came to an arrangement with UJ administration that allowed her to continue and having good marks qualified her for additional fee reduction. As she resumed her studies, she was making the best out of her UJ experience, becoming chairperson of a society and playing on a sports team, having felt that in her first year she had too much free time and that she could use it to enhance her career prospects.

Katleho's experience of financial insecurity sparked in her a new passion for FMF. She told me that with experience come emotions that make the stories one hears from other students so much more real. She applied the same logic to apartheid narratives that she knew from her parents – stories that made her sad,

as she said, but stories which she would forget the moment she walked away from the conversation, because she did not live through them. Her comparison to empathy with those having lived through apartheid is an important one, because many young people who support FMF, as well as movements and ideological standpoints addressing apartheid legacies, are criticised for allegedly fighting racial oppression, which they did not directly experience. Many students whom I spoke to, criticised their Fallist peers for perpetuating racial divides and inequality by referring to grievances and struggles of the past. In the eyes of these students, evoking apartheid oppression was permissible for the older generations, while the younger, BF generation was 'only' living through some of its legacy. They did not have the right to complain, because they had opportunities and thus a choice about what to do with their lives unlike their parents and grandparents. Hence, experience played a key role in the argumentation of both the student supporters and opponents of the Fallist organising.

The narratives of experience in FMF can also be seen in the assessments of FMF leaders. Many of the student leaders in the campaign were praised by Katleho and others, because they lived through economic exclusion themselves. Their first-hand experience made the student leaders relevant, appropriate and authentic representatives of their imaginary constituents, although many of them certainly lacked any representative mandate. Conversely, several student leaders were rejected for their elitism, as I discuss more on the example of a prominent female figure, Nompandolo (Ulo) Mkhathshwa in Chapter Six. Her privilege was seen by some students as a barrier to her understanding the plight of ordinary South Africans and consequently limited her adequate representation of their interests in dealing with university management and the government, and ultimately led to the acceptance of the proposed freezing of fees instead of making education free. However, some UJ students accepted and valued even leaders who did not have difficulties paying for their fees because they were able to empathise and contribute solutions. Thus, in the absence of the ideal, authentic, experienced leaders, some students accepted allies, who were aware and competent.

The desire for authenticity rooted in experience is therefore a desire for a voice, agency and control over representation through others in situations where one's voice is believed to be marginalised and undervalued. With reference to the discourse of 'black pain' in the #EndRapeCulture student campaign, which emerged alongside Fallism, Amanda Gouws similarly argues that it was an "expression of anger and resentment about not being heard" (2018, 11). Hence, Gouws argues that the campaign calls on South Africans to be moved by the pain and take responsibility. In South Africa, this feeling of lost voice or (mis)representation is unfortunately shared by students across racial and socio-economic groups, including many who falsely perceive their positionality as marginalised.

It is these different views on the importance of experience, empathy and the extent to which one can put themselves into other person's shoes that impacted the students' evaluations of women in politics against the ideal of an FPE.

Trust-Building: Cross-Racial Encounters in HE Settings

Many South Africans, including amongst my participants, believed that due to their ability to have cross-racial experiences and encounters, the Born Frees could bridge the lack of trust between racial groups. Hence, they could build a sense of understanding in the absence of direct lived experiences. However, the students are incorporated into the value systems and structures preserving the apartheid/struggle history and hence are not detached from the past. Some of the students viewed this critically, because they believed this focus on history perpetuated racial tensions. One such student was Sage Marley, who considered herself racially mixed (not Coloured), having a white father and a Black African mother, while often being racialised as white. Sage Marley was from Gauteng, and her journey into varsity was a complicated one. It included an armed home invasion, which negatively affected her ability to write final exams in grade 12 and to obtain matric to commence her university studies. Although she was not a member of any organisations, she had always shown interest in art, which she wanted to incorporate into her future career. She went to a high school that she

described as small, conservative Christian and racially mixed. She was adamant about the impact that an early exposure to apartheid history had on kids in schools. She thought that young kids find friends across racial groups, but they start drawing lines amongst themselves the more they get exposed to the narratives and histories of apartheid. This led her to the conclusion that the apartheid history should not be such a dominating element in early schooling, but something that cannot be forgotten nonetheless.

Bucie disagreed with Sage Marley on her opinion about the teaching of apartheid history. Bucie was a Black student from a township in Gauteng, but she clarified that she lived in its “middle class section.” She was a member and a team leader in an on-campus society and she came to UJ at the insistence of her family, as she had originally wanted to pursue investigative journalism and study at a college. However, she had been convinced by her family that she was smart enough to go to university, but that she should study a degree that was less dangerous. Only after our one-on-one interview, when I learnt more about her experiences of racism with the ‘Boers’²¹ in a formerly white school, did Bucie’s defence of teaching apartheid history early, make sense. During her group discussion with Sage Marley, she linked the knowledge of history to understanding the difference between Black African and white women in post-apartheid South Africa. She argued that historically, white women such as Helen Joseph²² were able to protest against apartheid because “as a Black woman you had to go back to the township, live in your shack, look after your eight kids, whereas a white woman

²¹ Boer is a term currently used in everyday speech interchangeably with Afrikaner, although its underlying connotations vary depending on the speaker, ranging from a sense of pride in the 19th century Boer history, to derogatory term suggesting a white, thick-headed farmer. Historically, Boers were predominantly Dutch white colonialists who came to the South African Cape. The Great Trek of the Boers into the interior as well as the wars against the British, represent some of the key historical moments for the Afrikaners, which arise against the perceived imperialism of the British and their treatment of the Boers as second-class citizens (Steyn, 2001). It was the latter, derogatory sense of the term that Bucie was inferring.

²² Helen Joseph was a famous anti-apartheid activist and one of the leaders of the 1956 Women’s March in Pretoria, when thousands of women protested against the so-called ‘pass laws’, which required women to carry passes in order to enter into white-designated urban areas. This historic event is of great importance in the country’s consciousness and is associated with the celebrations of August as women’s month and the omnipresent phrase ‘you strike a woman, you strike a rock’. Helen Joseph together with Lilian Ngoyi, Sophie Williams-De Bruyn and Rahima Moosa personify the March and its multi-racial character.

[would] go back home and meet Baas Van Niekerk²³ and eat steak for supper.” Therefore, the history and the present were intimately and permanently linked for many of the BF generation.

The majority of my participants argued, however, that young people’s views on race were a combined result of socialisation and personal experiences. Most believed that the older generations had a big impact on the youth by bringing them up with a certain mindset about cross-racial co-existence. At the same time, they proposed that because of their greater ability to interact with people from different races and their more diverse socialisation circles, they were also able to accept or reject the opinions of the previous generations, which they had been exposed to. Hence, according to the students, the generational differences between the BF and the apartheid generations, were actually rooted in their ability to make their opinion about other races to a fuller extent than their parents and/or grandparents, even if they ended up sharing the same views.

Joy, who was from a township in the North-West province, and whom I interviewed in March 2017, put it quite pointedly in her response to my question about whether white people could empathise with Black African people, if they were unable to fully understand what it meant to be Black African. She was born in a township in Gauteng, but her parents moved to North West, where they lived when we met. She was an NSFAS-funded student, and despite the fact that neither of her parents were formally employed, she felt their life struggles were easier than other people’s because her mother made sure they did not go to bed hungry. She was engaged in student activism on campus, including a community outreach group, and she volunteer with a youth organisation off campus as well. She said, “the current generation has a chance of learning, because they see. There is more interaction between the younger ones than the old ones. So, I feel like we are going somewhere... But the older generation is far, far from where we are.” Yet, many students still felt that they did not engage with people from other

²³ Bucie’s reference to ‘Baas van Niekerk’ captures two stereotypes about Afrikaners in South Africa, namely, baas as a slang version of the word boss, relaying the Black African accent of those people addressing whites in positions of power, and van Niekerk being a typical Afrikaner surname. She used these two stereotypes to emphasise her point of white women’s privilege.

races, despite the fact that in theory, the diversity of UJ student body should allow them to interact with people of different racial, class and gender identifications.

The lack of interaction can be seen for example in the spatial divides of various campus locations. Some APK spaces were unofficially segregated based on the type of students that used them. A student feminist activist once told me that she usually got her tea from 'Poverty Lane,' which referred to a corridor in the SS, where the food and convenience shops were cheaper and therefore affordable to the Black African students. The Poverty Lane stood in contrast to other venues, where – from the perspective of some Black African students – more expensive meals meant that the customers were mainly white and Indian/Asian. The barriers also showed in classroom participation. Lesego, a Black (African) student, told me of a particular experience that demonstrates the issue. She was from a township in Gauteng, but she lived in a student commune not far from the university. She described her financial situation as 'normal' and said that her mother was a hard worker, and so they never went hungry and had a roof over their heads. Her parents were both college-educated and public sector employees, but she was living just with her mother, and as Lesego proudly claimed, she was both a father and a mother to her. Although she was studying a degree related to politics, she was not active in any civic or political organisations. Talking about cross-racial experiences on campus, she said:

We had a problem last year in Philosophy where we were talking about race and racism and the Black students in particular were complaining, 'why are white students not participating and engaging and debating' and all that... if we [Black people] don't hear their voice, we're not going to solve this problem. That's how I felt, because personally, I really wanted to hear, from their side, what they thought, what they felt about the whole thing, their experience, you know, from hearing all this. Coz, their ancestors or grandpa, great grandparents, were the ones who actually went through this, you know, and the influence through generations, I would like to know more about that, not just the Black side of the story.

In contrast to Lesego's view, some students believed that all students participate in classroom debates equally. Hence, while there were very mixed perceptions amongst the students on the issue of participation of non-Black African students in debates on politics and race, it was clear that the cross-racial understanding and exchanges even in university spaces require deliberate effort and careful planning, as they were not happening organically (Davids and Waghid, 2016; Walker and Loots, 2016). Hence, as other research, for example Binikos and Rugunanan (2015) and Higham (2012), has also found, the mere merger of institutions of higher learning such as UJ and the ability of the Born-Frees to interact across races, did not automatically lead to the creation of cross-racial understanding.²⁴

It must be underscored that several students believed that it was the political ideology rather than lived experiences that mattered when it came to cross-racial and cross-class political representation. Mickey, who did not personally identify with a particular racial category, believed that, "if I feel that we have [the] same ideology, and we have the same ideas or whatever, it doesn't matter if you're Black or white, you can represent me because basically this is what I want and you're portraying it in the world." Mickey was in her second year in 2017 and came from a township in Gauteng and from financially stable home. Mickey's mother was a public sector employee and while at UJ she was not a member of any organisations, but she was studying a community-orientated degree. In a similar manner, Kim, a Coloured young woman, argued that race did not matter to her when considering women in politics. Although she believed that her race made for a very specific experience within the South African society, she was drawn to people's objectives. She argued:

A white person is there and can help change South Africa, ... why should I fight the idea? Coz, if it's gonna fix and help and grow and develop South Africa as a whole, why are we fighting the idea? Somebody from a socialist stand-point can say, 'but she's white, she

²⁴ While some students felt they did not understand the experiences and perspectives of students from other racial backgrounds, several Black African students in particular also argued that because of the centrality of whiteness in their everyday lives, they have to understand white South Africans, who in return, however, do not understand them.

doesn't understand' or 'she's Coloured,' 'she's Indian,' but I feel like we really need to let go.

Kim and Mickey's comments would very likely be met with opposition from some of their peers as a sign of their class privilege. As I discuss in more detail in later chapters, some students would argue that class shields people like Kim and Mickey from appreciating the importance of race in the lived realities of many poor Black African women and men. However, it must be acknowledged that Mickey and Kim's viewpoint is an important part of the South African social fabric and demonstrates the acute sense of distrust, inequality and change.

Conclusion

A brief overview of the political, gender and youth debates in South Africa at the time of my research provided in this chapter, sets the stage for the further exploration of the perceptions of women in politics held by the university students and the empowerment potential of FPEs as an ideal more broadly. I have argued that the South African social order is best understood as being marred by distrust that is rooted in the ongoing as well as historical abuse of power. This abuse is firstly seen in the system of corruption and patronage associated with the ANC-led government, in which many female politicians become engulfed, either as passive victims or co-opted self-interested agents, as can be seen with the ANC WL. Secondly, abuse is dominant in the understanding and portraying of gender relations, and the role of women in the society more broadly, through a simplistic binary analysis of toxic masculinity and submissive femininity, which leads to GBV. The widespread violence targeting Black bodies, and in particular poor Black African women, is another manifestation of the abuse of power. Lastly, the mistrust is also generational, whereby the youth of the country is portrayed to be both an investment opportunity and a risk for the country and thus a subject of decision-making by older, experienced generations. However, those in power seem to be paying lip service to the promises of change and empowerment towards the improvement of the lives of the young people. The result of this racist, ageist and patriarchal system, which is evident in the university spaces as much as in other spheres of the students' daily reality, is a

lack of trust in the state, be it in form of the old government political elites or the police.

The belief of widespread abuse of power and distrust leads the students to rely on lived experience as the ultimate source of knowledge and authenticity. Empathy and some level of experience is thus often insufficient to guarantee trust, although it is the prerequisite for any potential understanding and representation of people from different racial, class, and gender backgrounds. The desire to overcome distrust leads many students to positively evaluate others with presumed shared experience, be it women in politics or student peers. As Pumla Dineo Gqola (2015, 75) shows on the example of South African women fighting misogyny, in this context of abuse of power and mistrust it is possible to attack your critics by challenging their knowledge of what 'real' South Africa is. The process of policing and disciplining of what is perceived as the norm for women and men in South Africa is addressed in the conceptual framework for the thesis in the following chapter.

4 Conceptual Framework: Identity, Difference and Power

Introduction

As I outline in Chapter One, in this research I approach the RME mechanism as a process of empowerment, whereby the perceptions of the values, characteristics and behaviours associated with elite women in politics are understood as normative resources in decision-making. Previous studies analysing the RME (see for example Mariani, Marshall and Mathews-Schultz [2015], Desposato and Norrander [2009], Campbell and Wolbrecht [2006], Dolan [2006]; Lawless [2004], Atkeson [2003], and High-Pippert and Comer [1998]) show that specific contextual/societal or individual-level factors, such as political congruence, age, race, education or employment, influence women's participation and hence moderate the RME. In other words, these identities and characteristics have been found to impact women's ability to see women in politics to be 'women like us' or to be descriptively 'close' to them (Childs and Lovenduski, 2013). Thus, the studies highlight that gendered experience is mediated by other salient identities, views and experiences. Therefore, to analyse elites as potential role models requires linking the perceived difference of identities to the systems of power and to understand identity-based norms as mechanisms or means of creating and subverting systems of power. This becomes even more crucial in a context of distrust, abuse of power and scepticism about people's ability to empathise as suggested in previous chapter.

In the remainder of this chapter I draw out concepts from three bodies of literature that facilitate this analysis and that are used throughout the remainder of the thesis. Firstly, I outline how role model scholarship in sociology and psychology which focuses on education and careers, approaches difference in the relationship between role models and those who perceive them. This literature highlights that people instigate a response either as positive role models or anti-heroes based on the construal and agency of those who look up to them and those who see them as sufficiently similar to themselves. Subsequently, I tie these insights to elite studies, which show how difference is created and challenged as a technique of power that sustains the social order through the use

of norms and discourses. Based on these two bodies of literature, I propose that an intersectional approach which considers identities and structures of power is necessary to analyse the interactions between the empowered and the empowering, or the role models/elites and those who perceive them. Intersectionality allows us to approach identities and systems of power as co-constitutive and temporary and thus subject to change. Hence, by articulating values, characteristics and behaviours attached to FPEs and explaining them through the existing identities and structures of gender, race, class and age, it is possible to learn more about the empowerment potential of the RME.

Role Model Theorising in Education and Career Development

Sociological and psychological research on role models in the context of education and professional/career development is grounded in socialisation theories. Hence, it shares basic premises with the RME literature in political science. It also engages with gender and other systems of power and identity-based difference. South Africa-based research by Madhavan and Crowell (2014) and by other scholars globally (Archard, 2012; Lockwood, 2006; Quimby and Santis, 2006; Karunanayake and Nauta, 2004) finds for example that the absence of women in certain professions and academic disciplines creates and perpetuates barriers to women's interest, participation and progression within these arenas, thus mirroring the findings from aforementioned political representation scholarship. While much of this literature does not advance theoretical debates on power or social order, it offers valuable insights for theorising role models as individuals whose impact is affected by the perceived difference with those who perceive them.

In this body of literature, there are various theoretical perspectives on role models, which MacCallum and Beltman (2002) identify as sociological, which focus on breaking stereotypes through observance of "non-traditional others" (2002, 21); social cognitive, which seeks behavioural changes based on observing someone "seen as attractive, important or relevant" (2002, 22); sociocultural, which perceives role models as a part of situated learning of cultural practices (2002, 23); and lastly a humanist perspective, which looks at

role models for personal growth and socio-emotional support (2002, 24). Scholars often articulate this role model typology through their own terminology, while maintaining the essence of the different perspectives. Madhavan and Crowell (2014), for example, researched role models amongst Black African adolescents between ages 14 and 22 in the South African province of Mpumalanga, and they used Allen's typology, which differentiates role models as "ethical templates", "symbols of special achievement" and "nurturers/mentors," (2014, 723). These various perspectives reveal that role models come from numerous spheres of life and are applicable in different ways, depending on the individual young person who looks up to the role model. Moreover, many role models belong to multiple categories concurrently and hence the distinctions are to an extent arbitrary.

One of the key definitional differences that emerges across role model typologies, is the question of whether a role model is an individual worth emulating, and hence, someone whom young people find inspiring, or they are a person with general influence on a young person's life. While people in the former, emulation-based definition can be seen as 'positive' role models, because they are chosen for exhibiting positive attributes and achievements that are desired, the latter definition also opens the possibility of 'negative' role models, used for example by Archard (2012) or Quimby and Santis (2006). Negative role models influence the youth by motivating people to *avoid* their negative traits, because as Donald Gibson (2003, 592) shows, people construe role models by extracting from their behaviour ways how it can help them. Both of the approaches to understanding role models, however, are embedded in the idea that role models provide an impetus towards the action of role modelling, a "cognitive process in which individuals actively observe, adapt, and reject attributes of multiple role models" (Gibson, 2003, 593) to achieve a desired outcome.

Scholarship which focuses on the positive conceptualizations of role models highlights the importance of similarity between the young individual and their role model. Similarity is seen as a pre-condition for someone to draw inspiration from their role model, or postulated reversely, the role model must be seen as

sufficiently similar, so that the young person can believe that they too can achieve what their role model has achieved, especially if they feel marginalised or at a disadvantage because of this shared similarity. The similarity can be in identity markers, such as race and gender (Marx, Ko and Friedman, 2009; Lockwood, 2006; Karunanayake and Nauta, 2004) but as MacCallum and Beltman (2002, 37) highlight, shared identity does not automatically mean that the role model will instigate some kind of behaviour change. The process of recognizing this similarity, or 'identification,' highlights the fluidity of identity, its reconfiguration in reaction to subject positions and discourses, as well as the role of 'symbolic resources' that sustain it (Hall, 1996).

Role models' degree of similarity is also conceptualised through social distance or eliteness in several studies to show that exceptionalism of role models, especially amongst celebrities and experts, can affect the perceptions of similarity and relevance. These studies argue that high level of eliteness on the part of the role model can prevent their positive impact, because it leads to the conclusion that the role models are too different and their achievements are not attainable for the ordinary (Hoyt, 2013; Hoyt, Burnette and Innella, 2012; Rudman and Phelan, 2010). The aforementioned study by Madhavan and Crowell (2014, 733) includes a category of 'heroes' amongst celebrities, athletes and politicians. The authors argue that the youth in their study were acutely aware of difficulties in replicating their heroes' achievements. Consequently, they warn of the danger that heroes' successes might be seen as unattainable and be demotivating or deflating. Concerns with eliteness or exceptionalism are especially pertinent for young people with low-levels of confidence and self-esteem. As MacCallum and Beltman conclude, for these young people, role models "who can demonstrate how success is achieved may be more effective than expert models" (2002, 37). It is precisely these findings of salience of identity-based similarity, that fuel the concern that women in politics may not serve as role models for being seen as too elite and hence too different.

Many students in my research were confronted with people whose life trajectory or circumstances they wished to avoid and thus who could be considered as

negative role models. Ranging from “that cousin who got pregnant”, to “that aunt who works as a cashier at Pick’n’Pay” (a supermarket chain) or “that uncle who drinks,” these individuals serve as negative role models because they offer a normative reference point for the students’ articulation of the ideal role model qualities. However, for my research participants, role models were exclusively associated with a positive meaning and were seen as people to emulate. Hence, in the thesis I use the term role model only in the positive sense, the same way it is understood by my research participants. The term anti-hero or deterrent model is then used to designate people whose life and behaviours as a whole or their elements are to be avoided. FPEs can therefore serve as empowerment resources either as anti-heroes and role models and are thus analysed in the thesis in these terms.

Normative Power of the Elites

The identification of sources and nature of eliteness or the degree of difference that is posed as a potential barrier for role models, is the focus of elite studies. As a field of inquiry, it is marked by disciplinary tensions. Studies of African elites are often rooted in the work of European sociologists and their exploration of class difference on the continent (Daloz, 2007). In many post-colonial African countries, class-based analysis was historically long disputed on its relevance. Walter Rodney, for example, argued that “[c]olonialism did not create a capital-owning and factory-owning class among Africans or even inside Africa; nor did it create an urbanised proletariat of any significance (particularly outside of South Africa)” (2012 [1972], 216). In this approach, class was seen in Marxist, material/economic terms, and hence social stratification analysis on the continent was perceived via other systems of difference such as ethnicity. Lentz (2016) and Spronk (2014) highlight the changes in perceptions of African elites since the immediate post-colonial/independence period. They note that the initial focus in the 1960s and 1970s was connected to the western interest in understanding the post-independence trajectories and to anticipate the political and economic developments in these countries. The elites were in this context individuals with colonial/western education and with positions within the state administration and in many cases also associations with the military. They were

understood as holders of modernity, who would deliver progress in the newly independent countries and hence they were seen as change makers as well. The anthropological and developmental disciplinary focus shifted towards the poor and the marginalised in the 1970s/1980s, together with the rise of good governance agenda, which suggested that corruption and patronage of the elites was the main obstacle to development and the cause of the people's poverty and underdevelopment.

In the aforementioned context of mass poverty, class was dismissed as a useful concept on the continent; yet in post-apartheid South Africa, class stratification has received considerable attention and became a widely used, albeit continuously disputed concept. Based on the National Income Distribution Survey from 2010-2011 and Income Tax information, Anna Orthofer (2016, 21, 23) found that only 10% of the South African population owned 90% of the country's wealth and up to 60% of its income, making the country into one of the most unequal in the world. However, the de-racialisation of opportunities combined with poverty-eradication efforts following the end of apartheid, which I elaborate more in Chapter Six, facilitated social mobility, especially for Black South Africans, creating new impetus to consider more closely social differentiation in the country and to adopt a class-based lens.

Spronk (2014, 94) highlights that currently the African Development Bank for example, treats elite as individuals in the top 20% of the society and the basic economic differentiation of poor, middle class and the elite thus frequently revolves around individual or household income or daily expenditure. However, many critical scholars both in South Africa and elsewhere have embraced the argument that lived experiences within separate income brackets vary vastly; hence, economic, monetary or material lens to class difference does not necessarily offer an adequate measure of opportunities afforded to individuals with a particular income. Skills-based or employment-based classifications, which are assumed to mirror and nuance the economic conceptualisation of class, share a similar weakness, namely, they do not encapsulate other sources to power. Hence, while eliteness does include economic power, it needs to be

understood more holistically to include cultural, social and symbolic resources (Savage et al., 2013), which consequently expanded the picture of eliteness beyond employment, skills and wealth (Anthias, 2013; Savage et al., 2013; Daloz, 2007).

John Scott (2008) argues that including status and cultural resources was damaging to the concept of elite, because scholars started to use the term too broadly. The centrality of power and domination was lost, which weakened its analytical applicability and resulted in the abandonment of the concept and the decline of elite studies. Consequently, Scott suggests that elites ought not to be understood as a social class or a status group, because eliteness is about access and control over power and domination, which do not automatically arise with employment, wealth or property, which are the analytical markers of classes and status groups (2008, 34–35). As Wright (2009, 7) further explains, “inequalities of income and wealth connected to the class structure are sustained by the exercise of power, not simply by the actions of individuals. The inequalities ... require the use of power to enforce exclusion.” This exclusion is with regards to opportunities of others which can be restricted, for example by access to education, race, rights or citizenship. Therefore, as Deborah James highlights, it is necessary to move away from rigid class lines and differentiations in South Africa, where transformation processes have resulted in contradictions between “objective economic circumstances and subjective measures of worth and value” (2014, 22).

Burger and McAravey’s (2014) propose differentiating classes in highly unequal societies such as South Africa based on the level of their empowerment. Although they focus on identifying quantifiable markers of empowerment, such as years of obtained education or access to services which is in line with aforementioned class approaches, their reference to empowerment is insightful and can be expended to include normative power as well, which is tied to the aforementioned cultural, social and symbolic resources. As the transitional processes in South Africa are happening at various speeds, the adjudication and perception of who is in power and who is the elite, becomes a contested issue,

leading the majority of the population to claim hurt and injury, to borrow from Sara Ahmed (2014, 32-33), and to seek to mobilise discourses to (re)claim or secure privileges. Analysing the empowerment potential of the *perceptions* of female political elites, as I do in this research, thus requires that popular interconnections of status and class are accepted, especially when one considers cultural capital as intrinsic to class articulations and ultimately an expression of power (Southall, 2016; Seekings and Nattrass, 2015; Savage et al., 2013).

The centrality of power and influence in elite studies has led many scholars to distinguish typologies of elites. Some scholars try to analyse the extent of elite power and influence, and thus distinguish between elites and super/power elites. Others recognise different spheres, in which the elites can exercise their power. This approach conceptualises so-called functional elites, meaning that there are exceptional individuals/groups within specific spheres, fields or values, such as politics, economics, and religion (Lentz, 2015; Savage and Williams, 2008; Scott, 2008;). However, as Salverda and Abbink (2013) and others (Dalo, 2003) highlight, elites transverse categories and are intertwined through shared interests, networks and discourses, although they may not be joined enough to form class consciousness or be permanently constituted and reproduced; hence, they might not be considered a class. In the context of post-colonial Africa, Dalo further highlights the connection between politics and economics by suggesting the “Big Men” approaches being most suitable for understanding eliteness. He shows that these men redistribute both wealth and social capital and create networks, even within the context of multiparty democracies. Therefore, focusing on defining the cut-off points where certain elite levels start and end, or in which sector their sphere of influence is manifested, distracts from the key focus, which should be on analysing processes and mechanisms of creating difference, by which power becomes configured and maintained.

Norms, as building blocks of social order, discipline people to behave in certain ways and therefore are reflections of power and tools of maintaining the status quo favouring the elite. Haugaard (2003, 88) argues that social order is established through structures – predictable, routinely repeated actions, which

when enacted or performed are met with confirming actions, and which have a shared, accepted social meaning. Social order thus creates power, which allows people to be placed or to place themselves outside of the structure. Haugaard's theorizing of social order draws partially on Foucault's work in *Discipline and Punish* (1995), which outlines the techniques that build the power of the norm. Foucault shows various techniques of disciplinary power, which include normalizing judgement, together with surveillance, observation and examination. Based on his analysis of practices used in the 18th century French hospitals, schools, prisons and other institutions, he extrapolates the aspiration of the state to create a disciplined society, where power is most effective because people follow rules and regulations (the norms), without those in power having to exercise violence/physical power against them. Foucault thus arrives at the conclusion that normalizing judgements create pressures to conform and thus create a homogenous, disciplined social body. As he explains:

[N]ormalization becomes one of the great instruments of power at the end of classical age. For the marks that once indicated status, privilege and affiliation were increasingly replaced – or at least supplemented – by a whole range of degrees of normality indicating membership of a homogenous social body but also playing a part in classification, hierarchization and the distribution of rank (1995, 184).

Gender as a form of power works as a constructed set of norms, which regulates behaviour and can therefore be policed and disciplined. Power is thus wielded through “[s]ocialization, education, media, secrecy, information control and the shaping of political beliefs and ideologies,” and ultimately influences one's consciousness towards accepting and internalising gender norms (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2008, 466). Penny Vera-Sanso further explains that masculinities and femininities, as socially constructed sets of characteristics, hold power because “they are metaphors attributing hierarchically structured values to ways of being, doing and relating. These metaphors are used actively by a range of actors to create and discipline subjectivities and dispositions and to naturalise and legitimate relations of inequality” (2016, 80). Gender as a system of power,

therefore, is manifested in the ability to circumscribe or shape the possible actions of others, which stabilises the social order (Haugaard, 2003).

Constraints that are put on what is deemed as possible to change, are embedded within particular systems of knowledge and discourses, and reified by scientific knowledge or by references to nature and religion. As Cynthia Enloe (2004) argues, words like 'always', 'natural,' or 'tradition' are used to avoid questioning of social order and those in power. What Enloe thus suggests is that norms, and in the case of her work gender norms in particular, are often naturalised and disguised as culture or custom. Filomina Chioma Steady defines culture as a "collective pattern of living that conveys the norms and values of society that is handed down from generation to generation. It is both dynamic and resilient and has positive, negative and neutral attributes" (2005, 8). Thus, fear of exclusion from a wider collective or a particular community of belonging, where the majority adheres to the norms and acts in accordance with the customs and traditions of a particular culture is a form of punishment, which Judith Butler (2006 [1990]) argues is precisely the technique of power which disciplines gender performances.

Race equally functions as a system of disciplinary power as articulated by Foucault, and racial categories, which were introduced in South Africa by the apartheid regime, served as a tool of surveillance and monitoring of the population (Posel, 2001). Achille Mbembe, in his analysis of race, further proposes that those who are oppressed by race and racism evoke race to create a sense of community because of the loss of kinship that arose out of slavery. He writes:

We can therefore say of the invocation of race that it is born from a feeling of loss, from the idea that the community has suffered a separation, that it is threatened with extermination, and that it must at all costs rebuilt by reconstituting a thread of continuity beyond time, space, and dislocation (2017, 33).

Thus, the threat of continued exclusion from the social order that is built on whiteness and which privileges it on one hand, and the threat of exclusion from

the protective space of the community of the oppressed on the other, both wield disciplinary power and lead to the pressure to follow the norms of the two communities. Consequently, they create tensions and pressures on the targeted population not to be the exception from either, which are mutually exclusive (see for example Nyamnjoh [2016] on racialised othering by Black African South Africans against other Black Africans). Normative power and its disciplining through exclusion has notable similarities with the postcolonial theorising of the process of 'othering'. Being the exception or being 'the Other', as used by postcolonial, critical race and feminist scholars, points out how the European patriarchal, racist capitalism and colonialism, are built on the exclusion and oppression of the Other, as a way of defining the self as the norm.

Much of the early elite scholarship neglected women's experiences, failing to consider various ways through which women can access and exercise power by assuming Black African women's blanket a priori disempowerment, victimhood and 'Otherness'. Feminist scholars such as Patricia McFadden (2018) or Lindi Manicom (2005), however, have shown the important differences amongst (Black) African women in post-colonial era, including along class lines and hence through their access to positions of power and privilege, resulting in the disregard of the interests of poor rural women and cleavages in women's/feminist political and social organising. One of the key studies on African elite women is Tanja Müller's (2005) analysis of post-independence Eritrea. The liberation experience plays an important role in the Eritrean nation-building ideology, which is dominated and led by the men of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, and is thus, in many ways, paralleled to the story of the anti-apartheid struggle and the ANC in South Africa. Müller examines the views and experiences of elite women in two sets of roles, firstly, within the political leadership and secondly in business and academia. The former group of women comprises of ex-fighters and the latter are women who pursued education and individual professional careers instead. She argues that emphasis on elite women's education is a continuation of the post-colonial focus on the educated African (male) elites, as revealed also by other scholars, for instance

Carola Lentz (2016), Mattia Fumanti (2007) and Amina Mama (2007).²⁵ Hence, Müller and others highlight women's various sources of power and privilege behind their elite status.

As a result of the need for a comprehensive look on elites, Salverda and Abbink provide an all-encompassing definition of elite as a "relatively small group within the societal hierarchy that claims and/or is accorded power, prestige, or command over others on the basis of a number of publicly recognised criteria, and aims to preserve and entrench its status thus acquired" (2013, 1). Put differently, the definition suggests that elites are exceptional people because of their small number, as well as due to their possessing of power or prestige that is not available to the rest of the society. Salverda and Abbink's definition requires however an additional, *explicit* recognition of the processes of contestation (Dalo, 2007) and competing claims over power and recognised criteria to ascribe eliteness, to suit the highly unequal and extremely polarised society such as in South Africa. Due to the ongoing transformation of economic, social and political power relations and resources in South Africa, the perceptions of who has power and command over people, or who is ascribed prestige, varies amongst the people and hence, there is ongoing competition over eliteness, which must be specifically emphasised in elite conceptualisation.

The analysis of lifestyle and tastes has been a dominant form of class analysis and conspicuous consumption, displays of wealth and excess are often framed as a sign of elite distinction or difference. Thurlow and Jaworski (2017b) show that elite is often discursively used to describe something as luxurious, prestigious or of superior quality, whether it meets such qualities or not. Its discursive deployment caters to the desire for the every-day accessibility of such

²⁵ While Mamphela Ramphele (2017) highlights the need for elites to be educated, she argues that many African leaders after independence substituted education with their struggle credentials, which contributed to the crises in many of these countries. Mazrui (1990) similarly shows the difference between some 'philosopher-kings' of this post-independence era, such as Tanzania's Julius Nyerere or Uganda's Milton Obote, and Idi Amin or Daniel arap Moi of Kenya on the other. Nonetheless, many of the intellectuals, 'philosopher kings' as Mazrui calls them, did not manage to achieve justice for their people. Many decolonial/anticolonial scholars such as wa Thiong'o (2017; 2005) further challenge the type of education these political elites received, which was primarily through western universities. Thus, they were subject to European 'memory of the continent' and the European ways of knowing.

experiences and making it affordable for the masses, especially for people, who are elite 'wannabes'. The authors show that eliteness needs to be visible and recognizable to the non-elites, but at the same time, it must be economically unachievable and unaffordable. Hence, it functions both as a positive, aspirational quality, while at the same time, it has in it already the seeds of its own critique and resistance, as any other structures of power.

Jean Pascal Daloz (2012) and other scholars (see for example Anthias [2013]), highlight, however, that in some contexts, elites deploy 'pretend modesty', discretion or inconspicuousness rather than ostentatious display of their status to others. Using the anecdotal example of "bourgeois bohemian" Daloz suggests that some elites express feelings of "downward social identification" (2012, 218–219). Similarly, elites who have recently gained their status also use pretend humility:

The dilemma they [elite newcomers] are confronted with consists of simultaneously distinguishing themselves from those who share their origins and from "aspirational peers" (which requires that they show off their success to a certain degree), whilst conforming to the canon of restraint favoured by the established elites in order to ensure their acceptance by this group (Daloz 2012, 215).

Moreover, based on his work in Nigeria and other west African countries, he argues against universalism and theorising of elite difference across various contexts, as it is done in much of the Eurocentric western sociology. Hence, considering how difference is constructed, subverted or obfuscated through norms and discourses needs to be analysed as a function of power in the specific spatial and temporary context, which is one of the tenants of intersectional theorising, which I discuss in the next section.

Identity, Difference and Intersectionality

Intersectionality takes gender inequalities as concurrently reinforced and mutually constituted through other "socially constructed categories of difference and inequality", which co-create the "unequal material realities and the distinctive social experience" of women and men (Hill Collins and Chepp, 2013,

68, 60). Rooted in constructivist thought, intersectionality thus acknowledges agency, resistance and change of norms and power structures and enhances our understanding of the complex nature of role models and of representation more broadly. Consequently, it has become a popular concept in scholarship on gender and representation to analyse the impact of various forms of difference, not only on the level of individual and collective identity (Alexander, Bolzendahl and Jalalzai, 2018; Kantola and Lombardo, 2017; Mügge and Erzeel, 2016), but ultimately on the level of structures of power.

The concept of intersectionality is traced most directly to the works of Black feminist scholars in the USA, such as Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), Hill Collins (1993), or bell hooks (2001), but its theoretical underpinnings are present in earlier works of women of colour, as well as in post-colonial/Third World feminist thought represented for example by Mohanty (2003) or Spivak (1988). As Batliwala explains with reference to the spread of liberation theology in the 1980s, women's empowerment became a "more political and transformatory idea for struggles that challenged not only patriarchy, but also the *mediating structures of class, race, ethnicity...* which determined the nature of women's position and condition in developing societies" [my emphasis] (2007, 558). Hence, women's empowerment scholarship has had at its core intersectionality of power, despite the fact that the concept had not been extensively used by most authors in the early stages of this scholarship.

Unlike in the European academia, where intersectionality is relatively recent in gender and representation scholarship, its application is more established in the US context (Mügge et al., 2018). For example, Brown and Gershon (2016) use the concept in their study of self-representation of US Congresswomen of colour, demonstrating the equal, non-hierarchical importance of race and gender in their website profiles. Melanie Hughes (2011) applies the concept when analysing the impact of minority and gender quota systems, finding that national level, tandem quotas are most beneficial for minority women, who otherwise lose out to majority women or minority men. Hence, much of the political science scholarship has operationalised intersectionality by incorporating race and class

amongst a plethora of variables, such as education, party affiliation, political efficacy, and in the case of only a few studies also ability or sexuality (Evans, 2016b).

For many gender and political representation scholars, intersectionality became a mechanism of inclusion (Choo and Ferree, 2010). It is used to include the voices of the systematically excluded and marginalised citizens, particularly women of colour/black ethnic minority women. McCall (2005) explains this approach to intersectionality as intracategorical, because it seeks to de-homogenise or de-essentialise 'women' by incorporating race and class differentiation and recognises the limitations of the category, while working within it. Many intersectionality theorists highlight that although these approaches have their merit and provide valuable insights, there is a need for a more complex intersectional analysis (Hughes and Dubrow, 2017; Severs, Celis and Erzeel, 2016), that grasps the unique nature of the lived realities of the 'multiply marginalized' (Choo and Ferree, 2010) and the consequent unique, sometimes even paradoxical way they act and think as political beings. It is precisely this objective that I strive to meet in this study. Although it works within a particular category of women, namely university students within a specific age bracket, as I suggest in Chapter Two, the treatment of categories of difference in this study are challenged and not accepted as static or pre-defined. This research is thus 'sceptical' (McCall, 2005) of categories because of the analytical weakness or even inappropriateness of identity categories that are pre-determined, strictly tied to the body, and which are understood as pre-set boundaries of belonging and difference.

Youth is one of such contested categories. Honwana (2012), van Dijk et al. (2011), Abbink (2005), Durham (2000) and other scholars highlight that youth as a generational category is socially constructed, yet the abilities and opportunities of adolescents to meet the markers of adulthood are often out of sync with social expectations attached to a specific biological age or a human developmental stage. While in some contexts generational transitions have been linked to rites of passage, for many young people in South Africa adulthood is

connected to employment, independence, and familial/marital relations and responsibilities. As a result of high levels of unemployment and poverty, many poor Black African men and women feel unable to progress into adulthood, making an age-based definition disconnected from their lived realities. Motherhood also serves as a particularly pertinent example of the socially-constructed nature of youth, as in much of the western thought, child-rearing responsibilities together with other domestic social reproduction tasks are often seen as a sign of adulthood. Many young people in South Africa and other parts of the continent, however, assume these responsibilities at a younger age than their European/American counterparts (Blum and Boyden, 2018), but remain perceived and treated as adolescents. It could be argued that the discursive use of 'teenage pregnancy' rather than 'teenage motherhood' is a manifestation of the age-based power hierarchy. As motherhood could be a source of power, older generations of men and women, and young men might be resistant to relinquishing power to the younger generation of women. Hence, young women continue to be marginalised through gender and age-based hierarchies (Harris, 2012, 2004). Therefore, age-based cohorts or generations are best understood as context specific, historically bound social constructions of relations (Durham, 2000), meaning that they can be challenged and questioned.

Scholarship within constructivist tradition is particularly insightful in operationalizing research steeped in identity categories, that many people view as naturalised, set notions of who we are – our core. In her seminal work, *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler (2006 [1990]) offers a critique of the theoretical foundations of some feminist thought, which presupposes that a subject is gendered and oppressed as a result of cultural processes and hence whose 'authentic' identity can be re-discovered. Instead, she highlights the construction of the subject through temporarily and contextually bound discourses, and that subjects do not exist in some kind of objective reality or pure form. Although Butler does not specifically evoke the concept of intersectionality, some of her critique and theorizing gets to the heart of the concept and its analytical applicability. Butler writes:

The theories of feminist identity that elaborate predicates of color, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and able-bodiedness invariably close with an embarrassed “etc.” at the end of the list. Through this horizontal trajectory of adjectives, these positions strive to encompass a situated subject, but invariably fail to be complete. ... It is the *supplément*, the excess that necessarily accompanies any effort to posit identity once and for all (2006, 196).

Butler’s observation about the ‘etc.’ phenomenon is rooted in her underlying argument of instability of identities and their construction through discourses, and hence in the conceptualisation of power, according to the Foucauldian tradition. Stuart Hall (1996) similarly builds on Butler’s and others’ theorisation and proposes to replace the notion of identity with *identification*, to highlight the construction *process* and its unstable, unfixed nature. He takes identity to be a “suture” that temporarily links discourses and subject positions (1996, 6).

The influence of constructivism in intersectionality scholarship can therefore be seen in the emphasis placed on temporal and spatial contextuality (Anthias, 2013; Brah and Phoenix, 2013; Walby, Armstrong and Strid, 2012). Acknowledging that power and inequalities are specific to a particular time and space, avoids the ‘etc.’ phenomenon. Ange-Marie Hancock famously argued that the focus on the ‘etc.’ phenomenon is often turned into “oppression Olympics”, meaning the urge to create a laundry list of inequalities and including as many marginalised identity categories as possible in order to determine the most excluded and disadvantaged people in society. Highlighting the temporality and instability of identifications, also means that change is possible, both at the level of an individual as well as structurally and systematically (Walby, Armstrong and Strid, 2012). Hence, intersectional analysis avoids determinism, which underscores the original political objectives of its scholars, namely, to bring about social justice and challenge racialised patriarchy.

Accepting that identities are temporary and unstable constructions also means that inequalities and oppressions cannot be understood in an additive manner. Nira Yuval-Davis (2007) and Floya Anthias (2013) explain the additive approach to intersectionality as arising from a misunderstanding of the analogy of

intersection in Crenshaw's (1991) early work in which she coined the term, and which resulted in the false understanding of the oppression of Black working class women, as three separate oppressions added onto each other. However, intersectionality conceptualises oppression and inequality as jointly constituted, constructed or shaped. Walby, Armstrong and Strid (2012) propose that despite the fluidity of categories, some get stabilised at a particular moment in time and with appropriate historical contextualisation can be used. They highlight that one needs to be careful not to see inequalities as a sum of their parts, while giving each constitutive power its recognition. Lena Gunnarsson (2017) similarly, yet from a different entry point into the debate, argues in favour of embracing the messy interlinks that intersectional analysis brings and suggests that feminist debates over whether race, class and gender are inseparable, or whether they are truly distinct and individual, are not productive. Instead, she argues, "We can put our energy into more precise theorizations of how different power processes work for and against each other in different spatio-temporal locations and for different subjects" (2017, 120).

The poststructuralist feminist lens offers a valuable suggestion as to how one can resolve the tensions surrounding the use of identity categories while challenging their parameters. The limitations of language and significations that are associated with the existing categories means that new frames can be articulated to capture the specific experiences and realities of the particular time and space. In the case of South Africa, race, class, and gender – and often invisibly, silently included sexuality through the heteronormativity of gender – are systems of oppression and identity categories of importance and are used both by the students and the citizens to communicate their lived experiences. They are equally used by political and social elites, often as tools of cheap populist point scoring. Thus, as Winker and Degele (2011) argue, articulating new frames which are informed, but not dominated by these categories of importance and salience, offers an analytical way forward. Yuval-Davis (2006, 203), drawing on Castoriadis, calls for 'creative imagination,' and thus highlights the need to find the right language to name and explain various positionings. Based on these theories of intersectionality, in Chapters Seven and Eight I analyse the ideal

values, characteristics and behaviours expected of FPEs as they arise from two sets of discourses, and hence from power structures which effect the students' lived realities and perceptions. These discourses, and the identities that they give rise to, are explained and analysed using the categories of gender, race, class and age; hence, these existing categories do not dominate the FPE values, characteristics and behaviours, but are used to tie FPEs and the students to the systems of power and the prevalent social order.

Intersectionality is very much decolonising in its rationale and strategies. Considering the intersecting and co-constructed axes of power affecting women and men in South Africa – making them at once the oppressors and the oppressed, the empowered and disempowered – avoids the Eurocentric tendency to assume blanket inferiority and powerlessness of African women and the dominance and power of men. Many decolonial scholars are nonetheless critical of intersectionality and reject its use in favour of other concepts, such as assemblages, heterarchies and entanglements (Grosfoguel, 2018; Isoke, 2016; Mendoza, 2016). However, I argue that their critical stance on intersectionality is against the way it has been used by many scholars, who rely on static identity categories and structures, and who consequently replicate the colonial epistemologies and inequalities. Secondly, decolonial scholars, as well as some intersectionality theorists such as Yuval-Davis (2007), critique the use of intersectionality which fails to consider structural interconnections in their 'glocal' iterations (Mendoza, 2016). Put differently, they critique scholars who do not consider the impact of global racial capitalism and the political economy when they use intersectionality (Anthias, 2014).

My interview with Lady T, a Black student from a township in Gauteng, demonstrates the importance of linking the local and global levels to analyse normative power. In 2017, Lady T was in her second year, and she was not a member of any organisations on campus, nor did she participate in the protests, as she thought of UJ mostly as a place to study and pass her courses. She lived with her aunt, siblings and cousins, as her parents, who were teachers, had passed away a long time ago. Her family depended on social grants and living in a

township far from campus meant that she had a stressful, long commute on public transport each day. Not many young people who lived around her went to varsity, nor did other members in her immediate family. She was hoping to continue studying after finishing her bachelor's degree, getting multiple doctorates and also working and being a mother at the same time. She thought it was all doable, but it would make her life very busy. When we were discussing the possibility of rich people understanding the poor, she described how some Black African people are not able to understand the experiences of the poor. She said:

Lady T: OK, it would be like this situation. I'm Black, I'm rich; you're Black, you're poor. We are both Black, so you can also achieve what I have coz we are both Black [laugh].

Ján: But is that not true? Is there any reason why you couldn't become rich?

Lady T: I can say, it is because of where you come from. Because, OK, for instance, there are Black Americans, they *are* rich, they are Black people, but [they] are rich because of the economy they come from. And *we* are Black, from South Africa or Zimbabwe..., but we are like, still enclosed into that poorness, because of our economy, where we come from.

Lady T's reference to the global racialised world-order was just one of many examples, when students referred to the international context which shaped their perceptions of their own lives. Many were keen supporters and admirers of Michelle Obama, Oprah Winfrey and Beyoncé, while many Fallists often drew connections to the BlackLivesMatter campaign in the USA, being connected through their critiques of institutionalised racism and neoliberalism. These connections were also often framed through the debate of Pan-Africanism and global solidarity of Blackness. Yet other students brought up the global nature of patriarchy based on the experiences of Hillary Clinton in the presidential elections in 2016. Hence, decolonial perspectives on intersectionality encourage us to think about role models and FPEs within the systems and structures of power, their normative operations and disciplining on a 'glocal' level.

The decolonial critique of intersectional research can, consequently, be reconciled by conceptual and methodological choices. Maria Lugones (2008), for

example, joins intersectionality with coloniality of power concept by Anibal Quijano to show how the 'modern gender system' is racialised and in service of global Eurocentric capitalism. Thus, intersectionality and decolonisation may work as re-enforcing, rather than opposing concepts. Lugones (2008) as well as Filomina Steady (2005) and Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí (2002) explicitly or implicitly question the appropriateness of gender-centred analysis in contexts, where other societal organising principles, such as seniority, were more salient. The imperial insertion of gender hierarches and their exploitation by the apartheid regime have made gender an applicable analytical concept for research in the South African context, only if not taken in isolation from the other structures of difference and oppression, which the apartheid regime also exploited (Stauffer, 2015; Moffett, 2006; Walker, 1994), but if understood as intersecting with other systems of power.

Conclusion

The framework for this thesis, as presented in this chapter, is built on role model literature from sociological and psychological research, studies of African elites and intersectionality theorising, which together facilitate an analysis of identities and difference as tools of maintaining and subverting power hierarchies. As norms are products of power and are used to maintain social order by the powerful elite, the role model scholarship highlights the need to examine how women in politics are perceived along the continuum of difference within the existing normative systems, and whether they are too elite to be deemed an accessible, meaningful alternative vision against the students' lived realities. While role model research has shown the different ways by which people construe role models and anti-heroes and draw on them, elite studies underscore how difference can be created or subverted through norms and discourses to maintain power hierarchies. Intersectional theories bring these two conceptual elements together by highlighting the instability and temporality of identities and difference, and the co-constitutive nature of the systems of power that underpin them. Hence, they highlight their social construction and ultimately people's agency as individuals and groups within systems of power.

5 Exceptional People: Career and Life Journey Role Models

Introduction

In this chapter I focus on the analysis of important decisions that the students believed they had made in their lives. For the majority of my participants, it was the decision to embark on university studies at UJ that was the only and the most important decision they felt they had made by themselves. It was made within the limitations imposed on them by their socio-economic and financial situation and the wishes, needs, and preferences of key individuals in their lives. However, the most crucial consideration was to pursue a degree, which trumped other preferences and desires, such as the subject, the institution and the location.

I argue that this decision-making process was rooted in the students' perceptions of the socio-economic situation in the country as precarious and thus requiring flexibility in planning for future life and employment. Consequently, the students' decisions about their HE were influenced amongst other factors by their considerations of different life journeys and pathways of various male and female role models and anti-heroes, rather than by specific educational or career outcomes. The students felt that it was more important to focus on learning how to navigate through life, which is marked by flux and instability, rather than on planning an educational trajectory towards a specific job or a career. In such a context, women in politics fail to serve as role models in the process of strategic decision-making, because the students did not desire their political careers, nor did they fix themselves on these women's particular professional posts and jobs. This lack of consideration of women in politics was also prevalent when thinking about them as general life-journey role models, as the students did not have the information that they would want to know about female politicians to draw inspiration from their experiences and hence they were not able to see through an assumed difference between their lives and the lives of these women.

The belief that women's presence in politics is exceptional and thus against the social order and the norms, therefore, does not come through as a direct, consciously articulated resource in decision-making that would be included in

the students' repertoire, despite the gender, racial and class similarity between the women in politics and the university students at the point of origin of their life journeys. The lack of information thus emerges as a barrier to overcoming the presumed difference between the students and the FPEs. In this way, the chapter addresses one aspect of the RM theory.

Role Models and Career Aspirations

Being in their late teens and early 20s, the majority of the young women who participated in my study assigned high importance to their decision to pursue HE at UJ. Some of the students articulated this decision from a reversed perspective, such as deciding *not* to work after completing matric or *not* getting married and starting a family. Put differently, the pursuit of a degree was a central component of their life history and decision-making. Most of the key people who the students identified as having influenced their choices were people from their personal or close social circles. Taneeka's pathway into her diploma in accounting demonstrates the role that such key individuals play. Taneeka's mother was a homemaker with a high school certificate, and her father was the sole provider in the household, working in accounting and finance. They lived in an Indian/Asian township in Gauteng, and although she needed a bursary to study, she did not describe their circumstances as being poor. After high school, she did not know what she wanted to do, so she spent two years after matric working. She took the only job she was offered, which was in her uncle's accounting company. Having enjoyed her experience and thinking that the pay was decent, she had saved some money and started her diploma course. Taneeka's future goals included having her own accounting firm, and "being an awesome boss," while at the same time being a mother and running a household – time-demanding responsibilities that she believed were achievable. Taneeka's choice of an accounting career could be considered as a challenge to gender norms, because she sought an occupation that would give her a source of income that was independent of her current and future family, which she justified by highlighting the precariousness of women's lives in contemporary South Africa. She believed that one never knew what could happen, and therefore, she must be able to take care of herself.

The exposure to women in the public sphere could have contributed to Taneeka's and other students' inner belief that being independent, sustaining themselves on their own, and being a boss of their own firm was in the realm of the possible. However, women in politics were not identified and construed in such a way by the students, including by the handful of those interested in a career in politics, which they understood primarily as working in the government at either the national or municipal level.²⁶ A few additional students were not categorically opposed to the idea of getting into politics, if the opportunity arose; however, it was not their primary vision for their professional future at the time. Some of these politically-minded students were pursuing bachelor's degrees in Public Management and Governance, Philosophy, Politics and Economics, or in Politics. Mbali, Tshiamo and Kim were three students who were doing a Politics degree, but their level of conviction about their future career in politics were different and I discuss them in turn to demonstrate the variety of approaches to thinking about their future careers.

Mbali was from a township in Gauteng and from her perspective, she was from an average home as far as their economic situation was concerned. She said that although her family would not have bread every once in a while, or struggled to pay for electricity, her mother was able to provide for them. Mbali was the first one in her family to go to varsity and she was 100% set on becoming a diplomat. She did not doubt her chances to succeed. She portrayed herself as a diplomat in the making and most of her answers and views were shaped by this prospect. She stressed to me the importance of showing South Africa in a good light to the rest of the world, which made her very critical of the behaviour of the EFF MPs during the 2017 SONA debate in Parliament, when they disrupted the proceedings and badgered Jacob Zuma to show that they considered his Presidency illegitimate. Mbali hoped that in 10 years' time she would not be in South Africa, but that she would be an ambassador to the UN and travelling the world. However, she did not consider diplomacy to be part of politics, but

²⁶ I return to some of the reasons behind the students' lack of desire to enter politics in Chapter Seven, when I discuss the expectations of FPE as educated, competent and skilled, which has been a frequent subject of attacks on women in politics.

something that was above politics; hence, she was not a member of a party or an organisation and she did not see herself as having a career in politics. This difference was primarily in her belief that politics was divisive, while diplomacy brought peace and cooperation.

Tshiamo on the other hand found herself studying a degree in Politics after a few years of trying to get into varsity for a Law degree. Unexpectedly, she ended up coming to UJ despite getting into a law programme at another institution, because she had fallen in love with the university which she said became more important to her than her love for law. Yet, she did not give up on law completely, because she was still considering pursuing it after finishing her current degree. Tshiamo was an African student from the Free State, who described her neighbourhood as middle class with pockets of poverty. Her father worked for the government and her mother was a teacher, which allowed her to go to a well-funded high school and even take some college courses before enrolling in university. While at UJ, she was not a member of an organisation or a society. She was not sure what she could do with her degree in Politics, especially because she was uncertain if she was passionate enough about it, although she enjoyed the modules she was taking. She said her parents asked her all the time what she was going to do, and so she pondered:

With Politics, I don't know where I'm going. Am I going to be a political analyst? And then? I don't know. Coz you see, in South Africa the problem is corruption. You would do so much with a political degree... I would do a lot, but with corruption, you have to have connections.

Her motivation to go into politics was there – it was the desire to do things for the country, but she did not think it was necessarily a career route open for her because of the patronage system in the government.

Kim shared Tshiamo's concerns over corruption and the need for connections in order to succeed in politics, and so she was also unsure whether she would be able to make it into Parliament or the cabinet as she hoped. Becoming the president of the country was not realistic for her in her mind, because she

thought people were too traditional and would not allow a female president to be elected. So, she had given up on that ambition. What she also shared with Tshiamo was that she had not always considered doing a Politics degree, and she was still considering her options in other fields. She was from a township in Gauteng, and lived with her mother, a bank employee, whom she described as being in control of Kim's life and someone very good with making sure that they were financially stable. What drew Kim to Politics and made her want to persevere on the path, however, was the ambition to be a Coloured girl who 'had made it' and who could represent Coloured people who do not have a voice. Faced with stereotypes of underachievement and lack of belonging in politics, she felt responsible to show her younger cousins and other people that it was possible to succeed as a Coloured girl. Although she was not active in any organisations on campus or outside of UJ, she said she wanted to bring change for the country as a whole – for all South Africans, no matter what race they were.

It must be added that none of the white and Indian/Asian students that I interviewed desired to enter politics and the majority of the students across all racial groups believed that it would be difficult for a white or Indian/Asian person to become the president of the country, because the majority of the voters were Black Africans, who did not trust people from other races. For example, one Indian student from Wits, whom I met on the recommendation of a participant who studied at UJ, believed that it was only appropriate that the representatives descriptively reflect the majority and hence she said she did not consider an active political career despite studying Politics. Instead, she wanted to find different ways of being a change-maker.

While vastly different in their relationship with politics as a career field and a subject of study, what the three above-mentioned students shared was that they did not say they were directly influenced by seeing specific women or men in politics. In other words, they did not explicitly connect their degree and subsequent career choices to being inspired and motivated by specific individuals in politics and hence the RME in its most direct, obvious form was not

in place. However, it would be misleading to assume that women in politics were failing as career role models in comparison to women in other fields, as the reliance on role models for specific career and education choices was overall limited. While Taneeka for example consciously chose a field of study as a stepping stone towards her desired career, most students' decision making processes showed that pursuing any HE degree was more important than getting into a programme leading into specific jobs, which is rooted in the students' perceptions of the uncertain situation in the country.

Tenuous Links between Education and Careers

A common 'how I got into UJ' student story was premised on the fact that they had not gotten into their first-choice programmes. Afterwards, they received a list of courses with open slots, googled what the subjects meant (because they had never heard of some of them) and then selected a degree just to avoid taking a gap year or sitting at home 'doing nothing'. Another frequent narrative was of students applying for a wide range of courses at multiple institutions, in order to increase their chances of getting into university. What these narratives show is a disconnect, or at least an unclear interaction, between the HE system, people's socio-economic circumstances and the country's underperforming economy with its perceived precarious labour market. In this context, many students find the idea of having a degree more important than the specific subject they study, which means that there is little planning or calculation of career pathways and hence limited scope for specific career role models to whom they could attach their life's vision.

The high desire for university education stemmed partially from the belief that the chances for acceptable salaried employment without a degree were limited if one was not going into business or entrepreneurship. Most students were convinced that degrees did not *guarantee* employment because of the bad economic situation, and because of several other factors, especially having connections. The strengths of these connections were shaped by one's race and class, while their gender was also perceived by some students as a potential obstacle, which, however, they were ready to face head on. Hence, having

connections mattered for employment in all spheres, and not only in politics. It is not surprising that according to opinion surveys, job creation and youth employment were some of the youth's biggest concerns and demands for government action, together with corruption and health (Kashe-Katiya and Tenbusch, 2016). However, within a competitive job market, students thought that degrees offered at least some advantage, which differentiated them from thousands of South Africans who are designated as NEETs (not in education, employment or training), and who are perceived to be stuck and unable to advance in life.

Students from all socio-economic circumstances and racial identifications shared this view of HE degrees. Many Indian/Asian and white respondents, whose parents had well-paid jobs despite not having university degrees, or who got their post-secondary qualifications later in their professional life, also underscored the importance of having at least an undergraduate degree. Even these students, who could potentially rely on the safety nets and resources of their families, believed that the economy had changed since when their parents were entering the job market and unlike the previous generation, young people faced tougher competition and higher demands. The students' perception is confirmed by data on graduate employment from the last decade, which shows that graduate employment has been consistently higher than the employment of people with only a matric, and considerably higher than those without completed secondary schooling (de Lannoy and Graham, 2017; Mlatsheni and Ranchhod, 2017; Bhorat, Cassim and Tseng, 2016; Babson, 2014)²⁷. Combined with the limited availability of university placements, getting into university renders field of study and career selection a secondary consideration.

²⁷ Several studies (qtd. in Baldry 2013) show that graduate unemployment rose more quickly than other forms of unemployment in the late 2000s; however, most of the studies focus on graduates as holders of any post-matric qualifications rather than just university degrees. At the same time, there has been an overall increase in HE enrolments (Baldry, 2013, 791). Moreover, one also has to consider the issue of under-employment based on skills, as Baldry (2013, 798) finds that 27% of her graduate research participants took on a job below their skills level. In other words, graduates still have higher employment vis-à-vis their peers, even if not matching their skillsets.

The students' concerns over their employment prospects were intensified by public debates of deepening economic instability in South Africa that started with the 2008 financial crisis. Throughout my data collection, these debates centred around the looming 'junk status' of the economy, as the three leading ratings agencies, Fitch, Moody's, and Standard & Poor's, were periodically issuing statements about their re-evaluations of South Africa's investment grade. They warned that without major reforms, they would downgrade the country below investable grades, which would make it more expensive for the South African government to borrow money on international markets and would slow down the already sluggish growth and foreign investments. In April 2017 the agencies ultimately downgraded the country in response to the aforementioned removal of then Finance Minister Gordhan from office (Bond, 2017a).

As a result of the perceived economic instability, many students believed that although they could and should put together a vision or a plan for their future, they must be able to adjust them. This meant that they had to be open-minded and flexible about their careers as well. Consequently, it was less important for the students to look for specific career role models in order to identify which degree, course or training to take; instead, there was more value in identifying people who were able to suggest how to progress through life by demonstrating skills and qualities, such as perseverance, resolve and ingenuity that such instability and precariousness required and which crossed from the personal to the professional life. That is not to imply that none of the students had specific career role models or that all of them had role models to begin with. However, they used these role models in combination with other individuals and the importance of the career role models decreased the more students believed their life situations were precarious and volatile. With the key exception of two of my research participants who were active Fallists, very few students saw this socio-economic precariousness and instability as a result of exploitative, profit-maximizing global neoliberalism. Moreover, none of them drew out the implications of this political economy on the functioning of the HE sector. This was despite the fact that debates about neoliberalism in South African academia were prominent within universities at the time. Most of the students accepted

the instability as a fact of life and criticised it through the prism of fee-affordability and access to varsity education. However, they did not draw the broader contextual linkages, which could be seen as a failure of universities to foster critical democratic citizenship (Keet, 2014; Enslin 2003).

Race and Precarious Life

The discourses of instability and unpredictability of life in South Africa have a distinctly racialised character, with both the privileged and underprivileged groups being dissatisfied with the status quo. For some Indian/Asian and white students, the precariousness was linked to their fear for their safety. Some respondents highlighted the physical dangers, including violence against women, and the threats to their lives, citing examples of white farmer killings, or 'Boer moeders'. An Afrikaner student, whose family lived on a plot not far from Johannesburg, felt worried for her family's safety, especially because their living situation resembled those farm settings where the murders had occurred. She was hoping to go abroad and settle somewhere where she could easily bring the rest of her family with her. She went as far as calling the white-farmer murders a genocide. Another Afrikaner student, whose father worked in an Afrikaner CSO, mentioned that although she thought that South Africa was a beautiful country and people were nice, she would not want to bring up her family there. The country was getting more and more unsafe in comparison to what she was told her grandparents' experiences had been. The sense of threat was for some of these students enhanced by the inflammatory racialised rhetoric of politicians such as the EFF leader Julius Malema, who had been repeatedly accused of inciting racial hatred when discussing issues of land ownership and the place of white people on the continent (The Citizen Reporter, 2016).

Most white students and some Indians/Asians also emphasised what they experienced as racial discrimination in their education and career opportunities, which came through affirmative action policies. Some students labelled it reverse racism or reverse apartheid. Probably the most widespread symbol of these policies was Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) or Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE), which denote policies seeking to promote

more Black Africans and other formerly disadvantaged people in management and business ownership through measures such as quota or preferential procurements. Their impact has largely been limited to profiting a small number of already well-established and connected Black Africans, while failing to transform the structures of the economy for the benefit of the majority (Jeffery, 2016; Southall, 2014; von Holdt, 2013). Nonetheless, it was perceived as discriminatory and limiting, which led some white and Indian/Asian students to either actively consider emigrating or feeling acutely aware of the potential that they would need to leave, should the situation continue to deteriorate from their perspective. Their future in the country was, at least in their mind, very uncertain, even if they decided to stay.

The issue of white emigration is part of the broader white victimhood narratives which emerged with the decline of the Afrikaner hegemony of the nationalist state (Villet, 2017; van der Westhuizen, 2016a). Charles Villet (2017) pointedly links these discourses of victimhood to the global narratives of white supremacists, as they bolster the 'swart gevaar' (black danger) ideas held by some white South Africans. The unease with global cosmopolitanism and cultural mixing that is part of these global narratives of whiteness, as van der Westhuizen (2016a) points out, contributes to the cultural 'inward migration' of the Afrikaners to protect their identity within white enclaves.

Many Black students consider these perceptions of some white South Africans as a reactionary push back against Black African empowerment. Amongst these students, most had very little or no sympathy for these 'white fears' and 'white tears' not least because whites continue to be beneficiaries of the political, social and economic structures which were built in South Africa by and for whites. Hence, whites' economic and education opportunities have been proven to continue to be better than of the Black students, even if the white students personally did not feel they were being systematically privileged (Kruss, 2016). Many Black African students argued that the everyday struggle against racial oppression and the lived experiences of structural and physical violence against Black bodies did not leave them the energy or the desire to care for the feelings

that the whites were experiencing. According to their views, the emotional labour of understanding Blackness and coping with the decline of white privilege should be dealt with by white people, rather than demanding the Black African people to do it with or for the whites.

Joy was one of these students. When we were discussing racial relations, she mentioned the pain and hurt she felt when she had heard the stories of what the older generations went through. However, she did not wish to identify with a specific race. She believed that although race still mattered in the country, citing examples of discrimination that she had experienced and witnessed, she believed that politics was supposed to be about ideologies. The following exchange with Joy shows how her perspective on affirmative action policies differed from some of the white students:

Ján: So, do you think it's fair to say that there is reversed discrimination these days?

Joy: Against?

Ján: Against whites.

Joy: No [laugh], well, there can be... I like that you use the word discrimination. I doubt it. Where?

Ján: I think some people would suggest that because of policies like BEE [there is reversed discrimination].

Joy: Ah, [mockingly], that's cute. [laugh]. White people are upset about that? [disbelief] That's really adorable. I feel like such things are [laugh] ...

Ján: No, say what you feel, are those things not helping Black people?

Joy: [laugh] You know, are they helping us? It feels like the BBEE is only helping a certain number of people, hence, I am saying there is this division of wealth [economic inequality] now, that's more what we should focus on. I am not saying we must leave the whole race issue aside, because that is still a problem, but there is more inequality in wealth than there is in different races. So white people saying [there is reversed discrimination] ... I don't know what kind of discrimination.

Joy's critical and dismissive view of what some perceive as white disadvantage or unfair treatment was in stark contrast to the opinions of some other Black African students, who actually concurred with the white students' sentiments, rejecting affirmative action as discriminatory. As they believed that the key

political and social objective of the country should be achieving socio-economic equality, affirmative action policies, both racial and gender-based, meant that people were not being treated equally. Hence, these policies undermined a vision of equal, non-racist and non-sexist society. Maremane was an African student who like Joy lived in a township, but her focus was not on economic inequality. Rather, she thought that men were being forgotten. She used an example of a campaign 'Take a girl child to work', which seeks to boost young women's professional career aspirations, in line with the aforementioned girls' empowerment discourses. Maremane thought that boys too should be shown different work opportunities and in other words, be given equal opportunities.

Similarly, talking about her own job prospects, Phillipine believed that as a Black African woman she was at an advantage and that Black African women were being valued in the post-apartheid era. It was a seemingly contradictory position to her earlier statements during our interview, when she had said that as a girl she had felt discriminated against at home. Growing up in a village in Limpopo, she was determined to come to university, having seen the situation in her rural area, and being convinced the only way for a better life was through education. At UJ, she was not active in organisations or political parties, and she was able to study only because she received NSFAS funding, although it was not sufficient to ensure that she always had enough money for food. Growing up, she said she had been expected to do all the typical girl duties, from serving food to the men, to doing the dishes, which made her feel unequal. However, when I asked her whether she felt limited in her career options as a Black African woman, she said that everyone was given equal opportunities now, unlike maybe ten years ago, and if she was not given a job, she would use her race and gender to fight the potential discrimination.

Phillipine's thinking is in line with a considerable number of students who believed that in post-apartheid South Africa all people were equal. They linked equality to the constitution, which was hailed by the government and the public at large as a symbol of national pride. It is vested with a lot of symbolic power, together with the judiciary, which allegedly protects the poor and the

marginalised. However, as several scholars point out, the ANC policies capitalised on the individualism and liberalism of the constitution to continue the apartheid-era economic privileges of the few, which I explore further in Chapter Six.

Overall, most Black African students in my research did not raise economic opportunities as a reason to permanently emigrate, as some non-Black Africans had. Nor did they cite the violence against Black bodies and sexual violence against women as a reason to leave, despite being proportionally much more affected than the white youth. This finding is in line with aforementioned studies that looked at the Black African youth perspectives on their future in the country, which find that despite their discontent with their situation, they are positive about their future outlooks. For example, while 40% of the respondents in Kamper, Badenhorst and Steyn's (2009) study wanted to go abroad to work, only 12% said that they would leave permanently. In a later study, Tanja Bosch found, however, that "a surprisingly large number of youth indicated that they wish to leave South Africa and live abroad because of corruption in the country" (2013, 124), while Amoateng (2016, 111) found that around 32% of Black students at UJ who participated in his research were considering leaving the country, in contrast to 60% of Coloured and nearly 50% of whites, which he linked to the latter's lower sense of belonging in South Africa. It could be argued that since the study by Kamper, Badenhorst and Steyn in 2008, which was before the economic crisis, the prospects for youth in all racial groups in South Africa have deteriorated, which could explain the different findings in the more recent studies. However, even amongst Black students in my study, the desire to permanently emigrate from South Africa was not high, with many people being open to going abroad to study or work, but wanting to return to be close to their families and to develop the country.

Higher Education for the Labour Market

To conclude the analysis of the instability of the education-career link and its impact on role models, it is important to highlight the critique that was raised against universities in the 2016-2017 period, namely that they provide education

that was not relevant for 'real-life' and that they did not teach practical skills that students would need in their future employment. Mirroring discourses in other neoliberal, market- driven education contexts, South Africans questioned the appropriateness of HE for the local labour market conditions and economic needs of the country. Studies echo this concern, as they show a persistent misalignment between qualifications and employment opportunities (de Lannoy and Graham, 2017; Trudeau and Omu, 2017; Baldry, 2016; Bhorat, Cassim and Tseng, 2016; Babson, 2014). Consequently, the university staff and administration were being pressured to demonstrate their relevance, which I observed when I attended several first-year student orientation events in February 2017.

UJ Humanities faculty organised a series of speakers for new students to tell them about the resources that were available to them while at varsity, as well as some problems that they could expect to encounter. A lecturer from the Politics Department was tasked with telling the students about their career prospects with a Humanities degree, which at UJ covered a range of subjects from Politics and Economics, to languages and Philosophy. At the start of their talk, the lecturer asked the first years to raise their hand if they *chose* to study Humanities and how many had done so in spite of their parents' wishes. With a few hands raised and through the laughs and chuckles, the lecturer framed their talk as a response to parents' and friends' concerns about getting jobs. They drew on examples of famous people with such degrees, including a popular South African radio host Anele, who holds a degree in International Relations, and proceeded to suggest that the courses would teach them widely applicable, transferable skills that could be used in any career the students eventually pursue and that are desired by employers. The talk was therefore aimed at making the degree more acceptable and relevant and assuage students' concerns about job opportunities and employment.

Transferable skills were also the focus of a talk that I gave to some first-year students towards the end of their first semester in 2017. I volunteered to help the student support services and was asked to speak to a group of students who

were enrolled in the so-called Extended Humanities programme. This degree is designed as a four-year bachelor's degree unlike the usual three-year programmes, in order to assist students who did not have some academic skills and thus it sought to address the aforementioned causes of low student retention. I was asked to talk about pursuing a PhD and to encourage the students to take a long-term perspective on their education. I was meant to prompt them into thinking about their degrees as a means of achieving career objectives and to consider what they could do in their first year already to set themselves up for success. Their degree exposed the students to a variety of subjects, but it did not necessarily provide them a clear job pathway.

In my talk I echoed some of the points raised by the abovementioned Politics lecturer, namely, for students to think about skills they were learning as applicable in various contexts and to make them attractive to potential employers in a variety of fields. After the talk, one of the students asked me what kind of pay rise he could expect if he obtained a PhD. The student's question brought to the fore the frequent fixation that I noted amongst my participants on accumulating multiple degrees, qualifications and certificates as a tool towards achieving economic objectives and desired life-outcomes. However, there was little consideration of appropriateness or need for such qualifications for a particular career, nor a consideration of a potential danger of being overly qualified for certain jobs that might be immediately available for young graduates. This ought to be seen as a complementary effect of my earlier observation that students considered role models for their journeys through life, rather than for particular careers due to the situation of socio-economic flux in South Africa.

With the perceived lack of relevance of women in politics as career role models for the majority of the students, the next section addresses women in politics as life journey-based role models instead.

The Importance of Relevant Information: Nkosazana, Winnie and Thuli

In order to draw inspiration from the life journeys of women in politics and to consider their exceptional positions to be relevant and applicable to their own lives, the students must be privy to pertinent information about these women. According to the students in my research, most women in politics in South Africa were not well-known and visible, or at least not to the same degree as the men. The students identified a variety of reasons, ranging from the patriarchal nature of politics and society, to the women's own lack of ambition and activity, leading to limited media attention and political irrelevance. Some also mentioned their hesitation to talk about women in politics because they did not know much about them. They felt that they would need to do further research to be sufficiently informed. Many South African women in politics had information about themselves easily available, be it through the party websites, their political office websites (Parliament or the Government) or their own social media. However, these sources were clearly not reaching the students, who would have to actively seek out this information, which many did not do.

Several women in politics were publicly scrutinised on the basis of their biographies and life histories in the 2016-2017 period and both their personal and professional lives were questioned. By contrasting the narratives around NDZ and Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and other women whom the students saw as role models outside of politics, it emerged that the students did not have the *kind of information* that they would like to know about most women in politics, in order for them to decide whether their journeys were worth considering for their own situations. This gap between the desired and provided information echoes the concerns raised in some studies that many young people find information in the mainstream media sources irrelevant for them (Wasserman and Garman, 2014; Malila et al., 2013).

The case of NDZ's candidature for the ANC leadership role²⁸ holds all the prerequisites for high female visibility and information availability. The visibility

²⁸Other female candidates for the position of the ANC president, Baleka Mbete and Lindiwe Sisulu, entered the race later in 2017 and hence, they did not feature in the debates with my

of women in politics, especially as candidates for office, is a well-established factor that impacts their role model potential (Gilardi, 2015; Atkeson and Carrillo, 2007; Campbell and Wolbrecht, 2006; Atkeson, 2003). Based on the assumption that ANC would win the 2019 national parliamentary elections, NDZ was considered the first viable female candidate to become the president of South Africa. Additionally, it was a highly-contested race. At the time of the interviews and group discussions, NDZ was seen as running primarily against then VP Cyril Ramaphosa, who was positioned as a polar opposite to her. Their competition was seen as a fight for the spirit of the party and a pivotal decision for the party's future survival. Consequently, NDZ became a household name, while prior to her return to South Africa in 2017, she had spent four years away from the national political spotlight as the Chairperson of the AU Commission.

Most of the students were only aware of her high-level position at the international level, rather than knowing what she actually achieved in her role. The lack of recent exposure amongst the ordinary South Africans against her main competitor was a concern for NDZ supporters. It was alleged that in order to gain more visibility, she was appointed as an MP in September 2017 and would subsequently be offered a ministerial role, which did not happen in the end (Matuba, 2017c). Similar to the very generic knowledge of her international posting, her previous national political track record was not discussed by the majority of the students, beyond the mere fact that some of them knew that she held positions in previous cabinets. Her supporters and campaigners, especially in the ANC WL, which started to put its weight behind her towards the end of 2016, used to propagate her ministerial experience as evidence of her qualifications to be the next president (Matuba, 2017b). They highlighted that she served in all post-apartheid governments, was an anti-apartheid struggle heroine and held a medical degree, which was especially emphasised if the media or the public did not refer to her as *Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma*. These strategies served to counter the claims that her candidature was primarily due to

research participants to the same extent as NDZ and, therefore, I do not consider their cases in this instance.

her relationship with Jacob Zuma and the desire of his faction to avoid prosecution and continue state looting (du Plessis, 2017b; Matuba, 2016b).

NDZ's connection to Jacob Zuma also dominated my discussions with the students, especially those with limited knowledge of her political track record. It was used to judge her fitness for the presidency and subsequently whether she was worthy of their vote. Some students praised her for the divorce and going for the hyphenated surname as a sign of her empowered stance as a Black African woman. Sat-Ra Nthabi was one of her admirers. She was a Black student who grew up in a township in Gauteng and came to varsity after having worked for several years in administrative jobs, which she had realised would never allow her to progress professionally. Hence, she was older than most of my other participants and one of a few students who were mothers. Despite the advice of her family that being a single mother she should not leave the safety and stability of her job, she had done just that in order to pursue a degree. She was very engaged in student activities, including holding a leadership position in a Black students' organisation and led a community-based NGO outside of the university. When we discussed her opinions about NDZ, it transpired that NDZ's life history mattered to Sat-Ra Nthabi and made NDZ into an inspiration:

Nkosazana Zuma encourages me... coz she is from the rural areas, and she found herself in a polygamous marriage, she got *out*, you know, coz, ... with us, it's still a little bit taboo to divorce and you're still labelled. ... So, if you see a woman that knows that she was unhappy and to get it into her own hands and to walk away from that situation *and still* make a success of herself, and now, be leading the biggest organisation in Africa [laugh] it's like [laugh] [clap], yay [laugh].

Other students, however, thought that NDZ had shown poor judgement by marrying someone like Zuma in the first place. Moreover, having children with him meant that their connection was still strong, despite the divorce, and therefore, his influence over her was to be anticipated. NDZ's campaign tried to move the focus away from her personal life, which was likely a calculated political move, as the core of her supporters came from her ex-husband's faction; and so, critically analysing their complex relationship could have cost her the

support of his faction. The key issue affecting the students' views was therefore whether NDZ was able to be an independent female politician with her own views, objectives and credentials based on her personal and professional life. The debates around NDZ thus show the kind and the breadth of information the students considered in their evaluations of women in politics and hence, which was required for them to consider women in politics as potential role models.

The abundant access to information that the students found interesting and relevant partially explains the dominance of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela as an example of an FPE in my research. Tropes about her life were widely known to the students. They cited her association with Nelson Mandela and her own track record as a liberation heroine as the reasons why they thought of her as an FPE. During the course of my data collection she appeared in the media several times, including for her 80th birthday in September 2016, when she was hailed by other women in politics, such as Baleka Mbete (2016), as the ultimate mother of the nation. Many politicians spoke highly of her courage, strength and of her role as a symbol of perseverance in the struggle for people in the townships (Ramaphosa, 2016b). Celebratory events and parties commemorating her achievements lasted for weeks, which enhanced her special status in the collective memory of the country.

While Winnie Madikizela-Mandela continued to comment on the affairs of the ANC and the country more generally, it was her past history that garnered students' interest. They spoke about her personality traits, which were manifested in her actions. She was labelled as powerful, speaking her mind and not being intimidated, leading the struggle as a woman in a patriarchal society and stepping up as a leader during her husband's absence. Winnie Madikizela-Mandela's personal circumstances as a mother without a husband, as well as her romantic affairs were also mentioned, but not critically, and some students underscored the unfair negative publicity that she had received. Some students falsely associated Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and other members of the older generation of women in politics with the Women's March of 1956. None of the four leading women of the Women's March, discussed in Chapter Three, were

brought up specifically as individual examples of FPEs during my fieldwork, although some students did speak about the women from the March more broadly and collectively. Other liberation figures, such as Albertina Sisulu or Adelina Tambo, were also mentioned by some students, and women such as Ruth First, an anti-apartheid activist researcher and journalist, were referenced only by their association to other, predominantly male figures (for example her husband Joe Slovo) or by their roles, rather than by their names and in their own right.

What my findings about these historical female leaders suggest is that what mattered to students were collective, generalizable behaviours and personality traits, while particular women and their life journeys fell to the sideline. The only exceptions were hyper-visible women such as Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, who continued to be given personalised attention in the public domain at the time; however, this was predominantly based on their past actions and life-stories, which were interesting sources of information – much more so than the details of their career positions or qualifications. Keitumetse, an African (black) law student from Gauteng, captured the difference between the kind of information a student would like to know about women in politics and the information that was available. She grew up in a township, but she was from a financially secure home. Although her father and mother were separated, he was helping to pay for Keitumetse's studies. She grew up with her mother, aunt and cousins, and women in her family were all educated, be it through a college or university. While at UJ, she joined a day house and was a community engagement volunteer, and she also worked off campus, especially in promotions. She said she did not believe in gender norms which made Black African women be submissive, and she said she definitely did not follow the stereotypes. When I asked her about women in politics and being able to look up to them, she said:

The first thing that comes to politics for me is corruption. Like, [sigh] she probably corrupted something, she probably paid someone to get where she is, but then you're like, nah, let me not judge a book by its cover. Let's find out more about this person, but then, there really isn't much to know about that person. ... You're just like, I can be like her to a certain extent, but, eish, is she really

nice? ... You start wondering those things, trust me. You just keep swaying until you make up your mind. You just become too critical to that person until they can change your perspective that you have of them.

Keitumetse's statement shows that professional track records are never separated from personal and character-based considerations. These personal considerations are communicated through the biographical information the students have access to and in the case of many women in politics, the relevant and desired information is not readily available. In the absence of this information, students make decisions based on their constructed assumptions. For example, those students who found NDZ inspiring without knowing much about her, did so mostly on their belief about what she as a woman in politics must have done in order to get where she was. In other words, it was the qualities that they vested into an idealised version of NDZ as an FPE that led them to their perception of NDZ as a role model. Those who rejected her had little doubt that on paper she had the required experience to be a presidential candidate. She was accepted as an exceptional woman and for many students she was even a woman who successfully challenged power that relegates Black African women out of decision-making. However, with the lack of personal-level character information about her, the students applied their knowledge and assumptions about the socio-political norms in the country and about the ANC under Jacob Zuma onto her person²⁹. In the case of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, the opposite was the case, as although being intimately connected with the ANC, it was her personal life history during apartheid that dominated, instead of ANC-politics of the post-1994 era, which can partly be explained by ANC distancing itself from her in the late 1990s. Hence, even if well-known, the mere exceptionalism of women's positions of power in a context of patriarchal gender norms, does not suffice to satisfy the students' information needs. They do not provide the necessary details on women's generic life pathways to be

²⁹ Similarly to NDZ, Busiswe Mkhwebane who was appointed the public protector after Thuli Madonsela in October 2016, was scrutinised in the public based on her potential connections to Jacob Zuma, as well as her professional qualifications and character, which was undermined by her stint with the South African state security apparatus. She featured heavily in student discussions which took place at the time of Mkhwebane's selection and her case further substantiates the importance of information, the political system and the close interconnection of private histories, professional track record and qualities.

empowering resources that the students would be able to see as obviously or directly relevant.

Sat-Ra Nthabi's perceptions of Thuli Madonsela also demonstrate how suppositions held by the students impact their views of individual women in absence of information. During our interview she differentiated various kinds of women in politics. In contrast to women who made it because of their association with important men, such as Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, she believed that women like Thuli Madonsela made it because of their class positioning. She said:

And your Thuli Madonselas again, for someone who's like me, coming from the township, I can't look up to her because she is not from the township. She had better living conditions than I did, you know; so for me, it's like I wanna be like her, but I can't say she's my role model, because she couldn't even have walked the path I walk, you know? ... She's always had an advantage, you know, she had the good schools, she didn't have to stress about going to varsity and all of those things.

Sat-Ra Nthabi's remarks were echoed by many students, albeit not specifically with regards to Madonsela. However, class difference was not an issue for all Black African students who came from township settings, or from poor households as it could be assumed. More importantly, however, Sat-Ra Nthabi's statement shows the impact of misinformation about women in politics, because Madonsela was actually born in Soweto to a patriarch father who was an informal trader and worker, while her mother was a domestic worker and a hustler. In her early years, Madonsela was a teacher and also an imprisoned anti-apartheid activist before she pursued her law career and became involved in the political transition process through contributing to the constitution drafting, ultimately leading to her post as the public protector in 2009 (Gqubule, 2017; Ngqola, 2014). Hence, her life story does have a role model potential, but the issue of information arises as an inhibiting factor.

The Impact of the Political System

Access to information about women in politics must be seen within the context of the political system in which they function. While the PR system is positively

associated with women's successful entry into office, the potential downside of this system is its tendency to accentuate the parties as collectives, rather than particular politicians (Achury, Ramírez and Cantú, 2017; Valdini, 2013; Atkeson and Carrillo, 2007; Shugart, Valdini and Suominen, 2005). What enhances these collectivising tendencies of the PR system in the case of South Africa is the ANC portraying itself as a national liberation movement. The party was established as 'one with the people' and at least discursively is based on the idea of popular, broad-based movement. It continues this image with its populist rhetoric and appeals to its historical origins (Brooks, 2017) and incorporates the values of collectivism and Ubuntu as leading African values. Individual ambition and desire for limelight then arises as a negative trait, which leaves little room for the individual profiling of women and for the presentation of their life journeys outside of the broader ANC/struggle framing. Patricia McFadden captures this tendency of African nationalism in her call for new kind of feminism that recognises the individual. She writes,

Just the realization that the time for a different kind of feminism has arrived, which puts the individual Black woman at the center of its epistemology and lived aesthetic, creates a deep rupture with the ideological and often intimate hold that nationalism has had over Black feminist politics and activism (2018, 421).

Many ANC female politicians have a long track record within the liberation struggle and the movement/party. Consequently, being a 'constant presence' in politics, the media would not have any particular impetus to promote their individual histories, unlike in the case of new or controversial entrants, who are unknown to both the youth and the older generations. An example is MP Bridget Masango, who was in 2017 the shadow Social Development Minister for the DA. Her life story was profiled in the Daily Maverick (Thamm, 2017), as she raised critique against Bathabile Dlamini. She was a new face in politics, with a relatively low profile, having entered the DA and Parliament late in her life. Although her story most probably did not get widespread coverage through the Daily Maverick story, it shows the relative lack of impetus to show the biographies of women who are 'stalwarts' which is detrimental to their relevance in the eyes of the youth.

The DA stands in stark contrast to the ANC in this regard, as it had not been able to claim to be 'one with the people'. The DA has always functioned as a political party in the post-apartheid history, rather than as a mass movement. Its voters are not as strongly affiliated with the party, while the ANC is for many Black Africans like a family or the 'mother' (Gordon, Struwig and Roberts, 2017; Suttner, 2017a; Paret, 2016; Struwig, Gordon and Roberts, 2016; Dawson, 2014a; Southern, 2011). Hence, the individual-group dynamics functions in the reversed directionality for the DA, with key leaders being the embodiments of the party's values as a whole. Helen Zille, arguably one of the most controversial figures in my research, and Mmusi Maimane, her successor, are the most illustrative examples.

Most of my research participants formed their opinions about the DA based on what they knew about either of these two politicians as its top representatives. Zille was seen by a handful of students as someone who represented their interests, while several revered her as a woman in politics that they said they could look up to. She was respected as a successful, strong woman in politics, as she made it to the position of Premier and leader of a major political party. Her journalism background and her reporting on the murder of Steve Biko, a prominent Black African thinker and activist, was known to some of my participants and they gave Zille credit for her past contributions to the South African transformation. Yet her weaknesses and flaws were many. Some students labelled her tweets or political campaigning strategies as outright racism and others, especially white students, saw them more apologetically as thoughtless or as showing flawed political competency in an era when South Africans were sensitive to race issues. One of the most aggravating elements of Zille's personality for Black African students was their perception that she was hiding her true views and beliefs. They argued that Zille's inauthenticity was best seen in her appeals to Black African voters before elections. She was remembered for dressing up in traditional garments and singing and dancing with Black African people, only to change her attitudes after the elections were over. A feminist Fallist student, assessed Zille almost apologetically in this way:

I respect her, I don't wanna lie. As a female, I respect her, as she was so strong, and she was going for it. She did not stop, and I like that type of character. But of course, ... for me, when she started using Black bodies to get Black votes, that's when I was, nah, you can't do that.

Many students also recalled the 2016 municipal elections, when shortly after the polls closed and DA made inroads in key municipalities, Zille reacted to UCT Black African students by tweeting "If this woke bunch hate being UCT students so much, pls help them out of their misery and withdraw funding." (@helenzille, 2016). Some students interpreted this as a sign that during the campaign she was on her best behaviour, but as soon as the DA got what it wanted from Black African people, she showed her true opinions about the Black African youth. Zille's comments from March 2017 on the positive aspects of colonialism in Singapore were arguably one of the most divisive of her political moves at the time (Zille, 2017). Her article led to internal party investigations and a demanded, unreserved public apology, which she provided in the end and thus prevented being recalled by the party from her premiership position.

Unsurprisingly, many Black Africans ascribed whiteness to the party, as a result of Zille's actions, which was further exacerbated by the perceived dominance of whites amongst its MPs and supporters. Despite the change in leadership, they still believed in her control over the party from the sidelines. Moreover, many of the students who critiqued her also subscribed to the idea that economic power of the white minority in South Africa meant that they had real political power and control. Therefore, they would dismiss Maimane as a puppet or a Black face to attract voters.

Other Black African as well as white students saw the transition from Zille to Maimane as a sign of the party's transformation. It was a confirmation that it can no longer be considered a white party or the party that could bring back apartheid based on its historical legacy, as the DA arose from mergers of various smaller opposition parties, including the remnants of the NP. Yet another group of students saw the transition primarily as a gender issue, whereby Zille had to be replaced by a (Black African) man, despite the plethora of strong female

candidates for the role. It must be noted that the DA supporters were more prone to give the party the benefit of the doubt that the transition to Maimane was a genuine expression of non-racialism, while those who supported other parties, or did not have particular party preference, were more sceptical of this change, which is to be expected as party affiliations shape the citizens' perceptions of socio-economic and political issues.

A majority of the students across political affiliations considered South African politics and Parliament in particular to be a 'circus' and expressed their frustration with the MPs' constant fighting that was witnessed in the National Assembly. Others labelled Parliament a 'joke' and said that they watched the parliamentary sessions on TV for "all the wrong reasons," meaning that they watched it as a source of entertainment or to see what drama would unfold, rather than to learn about policies or to gain important insights. Some took a less sarcastic, yet equally pessimistic view and thought that it was often disrespectful and undignified; this was especially the case with regards to the disruptions of the SONA.

In place of what the students witnessed in the Parliament, many of my participants desired political parties coming together for the sake of the country. They called for collaborative and bridge-building, rather than divisive politics, which can be seen as an iteration of their desire for societal healing (Berger, 2014). These students believed that all political parties had some beneficial and interesting ideas and strengths, which should be combined for the benefit of the country. This observation reflects the results of the 2015 Afrobarometer study, which also underscored the desire for cooperation in light of the difficult situation that the country was in (Lekalake, 2017). In this regard, it could be argued that the ANC's persistent messaging on unity and responsible citizenship has led many to believe that only cross-societal and political collaborations can bring the desired development for all. Many of the students were therefore struggling to decide which party they would vote for, as they said they liked various elements of the parties. At the same time, they considered the symbolic issues such as race and class of the parties and their representatives. While the

students did not frame this view in the political science jargon, but in essence, they desired coalition politics.

In the ANC-dominated political system and in the corrupt, conflict-ridden environment marred by distrust and inequality that was dominating the perceptions of young South Africans in 2016-2017, it is clear that women in politics tended to be painted with the broad brush of dirty politics. Most of my research participants embraced this viewpoint and none of them believed that politics as a professional field was ethical or honest. Even those who sought to go into politics, qualified their entry by saying that they would be different from those currently in power. They were adamant that they would not fall into the same trap as their predecessors. Therefore, with the potential exception of Thuli Madonsela, women in politics did not serve as ethical role models either, which then negatively impacted their ability to be seen as journey-based role models and career role models, as all of these spheres impact each other and do not function in isolation. Individuals who were mentioned as role models for their ethics and morality were for example Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi and Mother Theresa. However, they were mentioned only by a handful of students and white and Indian/Asian students in particular, suggesting that the majority of the students did not have much need or demand for ethical role models in contrast to the journey-based role models.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown how the students' perceptions of the economic situation in South Africa resulted in a tenuous link between education and careers, and the concurrent desire of most students to pursue HE, without prioritising an academic discipline or field, in order to secure a degree certificate. As a result of this worldview, students sought generic life-journey role models rather than specific career inspirations, as it was more important for them to be able to flexibly navigate through life, rather than to commit to a particular professional destination. This has led to the students' disregard of women in politics as a direct, consciously articulated source of inspiration or role-models,

even for students pursuing degrees in Politics and governance-related disciplines, and those hoping for future careers in the field.

Moreover, due to the limited availability of relevant information about the life histories of women in positions of political power, the students filled in their knowledge gaps with perceptions of the ethical and moral drawbacks and failings of the South African political realm. The weaknesses and failures of the political system were attached to the individual women, which further detracted from their consideration as role models. Consequently, many female students at least questioned women in politics as relevant role models or rejected them outright. Therefore, the exceptional position that these women occupy and the challenge of gender or racial and class norms that they represent become ineffective as a direct empowerment resource for young women, who pursue higher education and seek professional careers.

6 Exceptional People: The Elites, Leaders and Middle Classes

Introduction

Tensions surrounding the notion of eliteness and the changes in students' interpretations of eliteness through the modifying descriptors 'female' and 'political' are the focus of this chapter. While the students understood FPEs to be women in positions of political power, especially in the national government and Parliament, and within the main political parties, they saw elites as a broad category of people with power, means, and influence. The most common qualities of elites as an elusive, undefined socio-economic group were greed and selfishness, which were also associated with many women in politics as elites. Thus, for many students the idea of being an elite, aspiring to be an elite or being called an elite – because of their university education, which is accessible only to a small portion of the population and is seen as a means towards economic wellbeing – was instinctively unpalatable at worst and subject to various stipulations at best.

Eliteness became acceptable and even desirable to many students under two conditions. Firstly, it was embraced when it was interpreted as leadership. This characteristic was ascribed to eliteness, especially in politics, on a normative level, rather than being widely observed in practice. The expected qualities and behaviours of FPEs, however, went beyond leadership and are discussed in other chapters in more detail. Secondly, students accepted eliteness when it was disguised as middle classness. The narratives of the rising or new Black middle class (BMC) during the post-apartheid transition are often conflated with the notions of Black elite, building on the history of confusing, interchangeable terminology.³⁰ To the majority of my participants, middle classness is vested with economic wellbeing similar to eliteness, yet it is devoid of the negative

³⁰ My use of the description of Black MC or elite as 'new' refers to the changes in the size and composition in these groups after the removal of racist legislation, which had blocked Black populations from social mobility during apartheid. It is not to suggest that there had not been Black elites or MC in the past. Class and privilege existed during apartheid because the regime offered education, governance and other opportunities to some Blacks and Black Africans in an attempt to shift their allegiance towards the regime and away from Black liberation movements (Ngoma, 2016; Khunou, 2015; Healy-Clancy, 2014; James, 2014). Additionally, these classes were not static either, but they modified in response to government policies over the decades of the apartheid rule (Southall, 2016).

values of greed. Thus, claiming leadership and middle class identification allows the students to admit their desire for social mobility and economic wellbeing, without compromising their moral or ethical values. Moreover, through students' specification of what political elites should be rather than what many women and men in politics are, eliteness can become both aspirational and inspirational and hence it serves as an empowerment resource and a challenge to the social order. Elites thus function for most students both as role models and deterrent models because they denote a set of exceptional individuals based on whom they can envision alternative possibilities for themselves.

Eliteness as Power, Wealth and Prestige

Tasked with identifying specific individuals whom the students considered as examples of FPEs, my participants chose women who occupied particular political positions, which gave them access to power and influence, even if they did not exercise them. This meant that the students focused in their discussions and interviews predominantly on politicians active on the national level at the time, such as MPs (Baleka Mbete, then Speaker of the National Assembly) and members of cabinet (Bathabile Dlamini, Lindiwe Sisulu), or women who held such posts in the past (NDZ, Helen Zille, Lindiwe Mazibuko, former DA MP, and Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, former Vice-President and then Director of UN Women). Other women, who the students also included as political influencers, were either part of the broader state apparatus (Thuli Madonsela, Busisiwe Mkhwebane, and Riah Phiyega, former Police Commissioner) or the anti-apartheid struggle (Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, Albertina Sisulu and Dr Mamphela Ramphele). As a result of power and influence, which distinguished these women and other elites from the rest of the society, some students also questioned whether women in the media, the judiciary, and in business should be included as FPEs. However, most of the students rejected them from the FPE categorisation, because they argued that these women did not fit into what they deemed to be politics.

Despite the overarching consensus amongst the students over the specific women who could be considered an FPE, the debates about who was the elite, or

whom they would describe as elite more broadly, proved to be less straightforward. The conflicting meanings and expectations that emerged are probably most illustratively summarised in a statement from Lebo. She expressed how her thinking about eliteness evolved as her group discussion progressed:

Honestly, this whole conversation is actually changing my perspective ... coz I was always thinking, elites – those rich people there... but now, they [FGD participants] are bringing it to the household and it's actually making me think ... Even in Politics [class] we are taught that elites [are] those people who are up there. We're not taught that elite can be someone who you can look up to anywhere, maybe at church, home, anywhere.

Lebo's response emerged as some of her group peers started applying eliteness to their mothers, whom they labelled as elite to demonstrate their high opinions of them and credit them with positive attributes. This application of the term was thus eliteness as prestige or excellence in comparison to the qualities and achievements of other people. Lebo's comment also demonstrates a perceived dichotomy between those who have eliteness as power and those who have eliteness as prestige and status, despite the fact that ideal female political elites should represent a merger of the two.

Additionally, according to my participants' responses, there appeared to be no consensus on who the individuals with 'real' power were, besides mysterious super elites, who were assumed to be 'out there,' but were rarely specifically named. In the public discourse at the time, a few exceptions included for example the Rupert or Gupta families, who were some of the richest people in the country, connected to large business empires and who were clearly designated as powerful players in South Africa. However, the students spoke overwhelmingly in vague terms about individuals and groups who 'controlled the strings' and who were the 'puppet masters'.

Kirsty captured the tensions and uncertainties around people in power during our discussion of Nelson Mandela's role in changing South Africa. Kirsty was a Coloured student, whose family was originally from the Eastern Cape province –

she said that was “where she’s from,” but she had lived most of her life in one of Gauteng’s biggest metropolises. Her father was a teacher whose job took him to various parts of the world, while her mother, who got pregnant at a young age, struggled with employment. Kirsty portrayed her mother as the dominant one in the relationship nonetheless. She said that paying fees was a struggle, but both of her parents insisted that she pursue varsity. When we met for our interview in late 2016, she was just finishing her first year at UJ which she described as a growing experience. She was disenchanted with politics, and coming from an ANC-household, she did not discuss politics at home, nor was she an active member of student activist groups or other organisations. Kirsty praised Nelson Mandela as someone she looked up to for being humble and forgiving, but she viewed current people in power very differently:

I feel like, South Africa, the society, ...[sigh]... the power some people have... the different classes, and all of these things that people put us into. That we are put into, by other people that actually have this power... I just feel like sometimes, neh, when the opportunity is not there, how will I be able to be heard? If poor people are not even being heard at this time. ... People from Alex [township in Johannesburg] are fighting, they’re speaking out about the corruptions and everything else, they’re protesting and then, they’re trying to make a change, but then, there’s nothing happening. Then who am I to try to make that change, you understand? So yeah, I just feel like it’s about the power that certain people have in order to make a change. And I don’t know how, yah, Nelson Mandela was part of the ANC, he was part of a political group and whatever, but then, who am I? I am just a student, you know?

Kirsty’s statement shows that people perceived elites to possess power over others, including over young people and Coloured minority, into which Kirsty belonged. However, it was hard to distil who all these ‘others’ were. Her statement further highlights that elites in positions of power were able to disregard the grievances of non-elites, whose demands for change remained unanswered, which shows the self-interest that characterises eliteness.

Students associated elites, including most women in politics, with self-interest, selfishness, greed, and corruption. Arya was a Black NSFAS- funded student from

a township in Gauteng and a mother of a young girl. In 2017, she was in her second year of studies and lived with her parents, commuting a considerable distance to campus. She was a few years older than most of her peers, as she had done a learnership after matric, then started a different course, but abandoned it as she had her baby. She was therefore re-starting her studies, this time at UJ's APK, where she also joined a volunteering community engagement society. In our debates about elites, she said that if she were to say to her family that she wanted to be an elite, she would be accused of "loving (material) things," which demonstrates the economic and material understanding of elites that many South Africans shared with her.

One of the frequently cited examples of greedy behaviour was the president's private residence in Nkandla, which the students saw as an unprecedented, excessive waste of public money on one individual and his family, instead of on those people, who did not have anything. Hence, Nkandla was a symbol of the excessive wealth of the elite and was framed through the language of selfishness and greed. The students thus echoed the public discourses and media narratives about South African politics at the time. Politicians were generally portrayed by other political actors and non-political commentators as not thinking about or not caring about the needs of the poor, the unemployed and the otherwise marginalised.

The proponents of this anti-elite discourse were, perversely, often the accusers and the accused at once. For example, while the ANC at all levels of government was depicted by the DA or the EFF as being run by out-of-touch, self-interested elite, the ANC was quick to retaliate and suggest that the elites were either outside of the party, namely the white capitalists, foreign interests, or only a specific faction of the party that was captured by private interests. Therefore, being called an elite became a political strategy to discredit critical and oppositional voices, together with being called a spy, a sell-out, or a counter-revolutionary.³¹ To strategically differentiate themselves and others from the

³¹ Being considered a spy in South Africa has a very particular connotation and history in the anti-apartheid struggle. As the ruling regime used to spy on liberation fighters at home and

political elites embroiled in greed and selfishness, many politicians used the label of political leader, and thus contributed towards the creation of a discursive link between the idea of political eliteness and leadership, which I explore in the following section.

Political Elite – Leader Link and Generational Tensions

Students in my research often seamlessly, unnoticeably, substituted the word elite with the word leader. In response to the questions, “who is an FPE?” or “what characteristics does an FPE have?” the answer would often start with, “a leader is.” The interchangeable use was a sign of the students’ expectation that political elites should be leaders, which was very common also in the media and in commentaries offered by politicians and other prominent figures. It is this understanding of FPEs as leaders that creates a bridge between the students in my research and women in politics, as the students saw themselves as leaders too. However, unlike eliteness, the idea of leadership was not vested with negative connection to greed and corruption. This understanding of leadership is in contradiction to some literature in which African leaders – understood as NGO or company managers, directors and executives – are embroiled in patronage, nepotism, corruption and autocratic tendencies (Kuada, 2010; James, 2008), similar to the political elites.

Several leadership scholars, such as Ngunjiri (2016), Brubaker (2013) and Ncube (2010), argue that qualities and behaviours that are expected amongst African leaders, be it in politics or managerial roles, differ from those articulated in the western context. This is due to the influence that culture, in particular the difference between collective and individualistic societies, and socio-political realities exert on one’s perceptions of leadership as well as on the leadership style options available to individuals (Kuada, 2010). According to the aforementioned scholars, the philosophy of Ubuntu, which can translate as, “A

abroad to undermine the resistance, spies caused a substantial loss of life and suffering, and much violence was perpetuated against alleged collaborators in return. The discourses of National Democratic Revolution, which are perpetuated by the ANC post-1994, continue to position any critique, challenge and opposition to the ANC as counter-revolutionary and hence discursively link it to the amoral, racist standpoint (Brooks, 2017; Sinwell, 2011). Hence, being called a spy, traitor or sell-out is a discursive strategy to discredit and delegitimise an individual (van der Westhuizen, 2016b).

person is a person through other persons” (Metz, 2017) encompasses the values and behaviours that leaders are expected to demonstrate amongst the Bantu populations in various regions of the continent. Brubaker (2013, 116) links the notion of Ubuntu leadership to the western conceptualisation of ‘servant leader’³² who is defined by putting followers first. However, Ubuntu also influences leaders’ behaviours and values, which emphasise collectivism and solidarity; which consider the development or empowerment of employees and followers; and in which leaders are models of ethical behaviour (Ncube, 2010). Moreover, they are also seen in the role of Christian values and spirituality (Ngunjiri, 2016). Several African feminists also put Ubuntu as the foundation of the value system for Africans and African women in particular (Tamale, 2008; Manicom, 2005; McEwan, 2005). Ngunjiri (2016) and Ndlovu (2016) argue that African women leaders enact Ubuntu leadership together with servant leadership through motherhood roles. Consequently, Ubuntu female leaders also call for change and transformation in order to achieve the desired society.

South African politicians evoke Ubuntu as the guiding principle for the country and it is used to demonstrate that South Africans are caring and self-less, and that their leaders should be the same, hence it is a value that is in direct contradiction of policies and practices that marginalise the poor and women in particular (Singh, Mudaly and Singh-Pillay, 2015; Stauffer, 2015; Bond, 2014). It was also instrumentalised and fused with Christian values during the post-apartheid transition process, especially by Archbishop Desmond Tutu (Ramphela, 2016; Eze, 2010). Despite a discursive prominence of Ubuntu in South Africa and in the leadership scholarship, none of the students in my research recalled it as a value that they expected FPEs to perform or enact. Moreover, only a handful of them mentioned the concept more broadly, when thinking about the status quo in South Africa. This seeming irrelevance

³² There are several theoretical approaches to ethics in leadership which could be seen in the Ubuntu-based theorisation in addition to the servant leadership. These include for example authentic leadership, which is based on transparency and openness in relations to employees; and transformative leadership, which brings people together around values and goals and is thus inspiring, as opposed to transactional which focuses on system of rewards and penalties (Kuada, 2010). Similarly, transformative change leadership is conceptualised by Srivastava (2018) as based on the needs of the community, as well as on empathy, and other characteristics, needed to bring about transformative change.

underscores the critique that language used by academics and political leaders is often irrelevant to young people. For example, women in the aforementioned studies by Ndlovu (2016) and Ngunjiri (2016) were over 40 years old, while in Brubaker's (2013) study, the mean age was 39, with youngest participants being 21, which could explain the discrepancy in the use of Ubuntu and highlights the importance of age in conceptualising eliteness and leadership. Additionally, the language of service or the vocabulary of 'being a servant' was also marginal in the students' description of FPEs, but it was expressed in other, more gendered terms such as care. This linguistic preference can potentially be explained by the connotation of the word servant in the racist, patriarchal, economically unequal, colonial post-apartheid South Africa, where for many Black students, service/servitude may imply exploitation, humiliation and oppression. Nonetheless, many of the values behind Ubuntu leadership, service leadership and transformative change leadership represent expected characteristics and behaviours of FPEs, as I demonstrate in more detail in Chapters Seven and Eight. The fact that Ubuntu did not appear in the students' vocabulary cannot, however, be dismissed as a mere sign of their ignorance or lack of Black consciousness. It needs to be seen as emblematic of wider tensions that the students experienced with the notions of modernity, tradition, culture, community and history, which were accentuated by the problematic practice of differentiating good, ethical, Ubuntu style political leaders of the past, from the current corrupt political elites and 'non-leaders' in simplistic binary.

The distinction between political *leaders* of the past and the present-day political *elites* was often based on ethics and service (Jones, 2017; Ronnie, 2017). In other words, the actions of the ANC and other political elites have been characterised by analysts such as Raymond Suttner (2015) as a "crisis of leadership," as they failed to put service of others before their own interests. Many South African commentators and writers, including Maserumule (2017), Reddy (2017) and Suttner (2017b) argued during the time of my data collection that care and selflessness were as a sign of ethical leadership, which were missing in contemporary South Africa. This discourse intensified with the aforementioned revelations of state capture and the so-called Gupta leaks – exposé of emails from

companies owned by the Gupta family, showing the family's connection to the state – through to the vote of no confidence in President Zuma in August 2017. Mcebisi Ndletyana, a political scholar based at UJ, argued in his remarks at the 2016 Ahmed Kathrada lecture that ethical leadership was needed in South Africa and he proposed that such leadership was seen in Thuli Madonsela, who was the keynote speaker at the event. In the media, Madonsela was often linked to political leaders of the past, such as Nelson Mandela, who was hailed as an exemplary ethical leader (Gqubule, 2017; Ncube, 2010). Mandela, and other ANC struggle heroes like Albert Luthuli and OR Tambo, were also frequently evoked in public events and political speeches in 2016 – 2017 (Callinicos, 2017; Mkhize, 2017; Phosa qtd. in eNCA, 2017e; Ramaphosa, 2016a; Suttner, 2016b) as ethical leaders, not least because the ANC dedicated 2017 to the memory of OR Tambo and 2017 also marked 50 years since Luthuli's death.

The connections and distinctions between political elites and leaders in the public domain were used to either exploit or avoid the negative association of eliteness with greed and selfishness. For example, in her remarks about the commemoration of Fidel Castro in 2016, Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, who was at the time Minister of Defence and Veterans, is quoted to have said:

I listened to many memorial speeches yesterday around the country. The question I want to ask is, why could *we, the leaders*, not mobilise thousands of people to fill up these venues... I don't want to believe that *South Africans are snobbish*. I think we are a very loving nation. But I think we could have done more in the past few days for the celebration of the life of Fidel [my emphases] (qtd. in Herman, 2016).

Mapisa-Nqakula's framing of the issue achieves two goals. Firstly, she puts herself and the ANC into the category of leaders instead of elites, hence avoiding the negative discourse of elitism and appropriating the positive values of leadership. Secondly, she warns the general population not to act snobbishly, a behaviour which is associated with elitism and which carries negative connotation and normative judgement.

In a similar manner, the VC of Wits, Professor Adam Habib, used the elite-leader distinction in his commentary on the 2016 FMF protests. In an opinion piece, Habib (2016) writes about what he calls duplicity, or Janus-faced actions amongst FMF leaders, “It [duplicity] suggests that despite their criticisms of the *existing political elite*, some of the *prominent leaders* among this new generation of activists are displaying behavioural traits that are typical of the most *venal of the current politicians* [my emphases].” Habib’s articulation clearly connects elitism with corrupt and amoral behaviour and attaches it to the leaders of the FMF; hence, he further builds the tension in the elite-leader connection.

The claiming of leadership identity by political elites can be understood as a form of pretend discretion or downward identification to hide difference and power inequality. At the same time, students’ claiming of leadership in distinction from eliteness, shows their attempt at subversion of those in positions of power as elite wannabes. Several leadership scholars show that leaders arise by demonstrating salient qualities of the group. Studies conducted amongst university students in Australia, for example (Platow et al., 2006; Platow and van Knippenberg, 2001) suggest that leaders are endorsed based on their relative prototypicality of the group that they represent. However, as Steffens et al. (2014) further clarify, this does not mean that leaders are the most average of the type. They show that leaders arise from being “the *ideal-type* of what it means to be ‘one of us’ [original emphasis]” (2014, 1002–1003). Hence, leadership straddles a balance between being different from others, while being within the norm at the same time. Rainbow Murray (2018) uses similar logic in her arguments about political representatives in what she terms a paradox of representation – the seemingly mutually exclusive desire of voters for their representatives to be the best of what the society has (the most intelligent, talented, honest, etc.) while at the same time being people like us.

The extent to which the older struggle generation of Nelson Mandela, OR Tambo or Ahmed Kathrada were hailed as comparative benchmarks of leadership, demonstrates a cult of personality and a saviour-like deification of these struggle leaders. As Keith Gottschalk (2016) observes, “South Africans and their media

are prone to either canonise a politician as a saint, such as Nelson Mandela, or demonise him as a monster, as Zuma.” Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015b) argues that Nelson Mandela was aware of his personal symbolism and iconic status when he was in prison and maintained his moral character after being released from prison instead of turning into what the author calls a monster. It is thus to be expected that several of my research participants recalled Nelson Mandela in their interviews, suggesting that he was an ideal political elite-leader. Nos, an African student from a township in Gauteng, described what she would like to see from a leader by using Nelson Mandela as a benchmark. She was in her second year when she attended one of the group discussions. She was a bursary recipient and was not a member of any organisations on or off campus. Nos was living with her cousin, as her mother passed away when she was still a teenager and her father did not live with them. She liked living in a township because it was an exciting space, yet she did not have indoor sanitation, which was very common for many township housing units, and she highlighted how people living in other parts of town did not realise how different life in a township was. She said:

Ideologically, I would like to see someone who would *strive* to unite South Africa as a country and to bring in that positiveness that [Mandela] gave [to the country]. Remember, that positiveness that Mandela had for all. Coz now people are always complaining, we are lacking that hope that we used to have...a leader like that.

At the age of 23, Nos was too young to personally remember the euphoria, optimism and hope that came with Nelson Mandela’s release from prison in 1990 and his subsequent presidency; however, it was very much in the public consciousness and impressed upon the youth even if they did not experience it. It is important to note that many non-Black African students found Nelson Mandela an ideal political elite, because of his commitment to non-racialism and equality, which mattered to the students, who believed that non-Black Africans were experiencing a form of reversed racism two decades on.

Nelson Mandela’s legacy and leadership were at the time of my research, however, debated in light of the perceived failure of the ANC-led efforts to

achieve structural transformation of the South African society and economy (Hodes, 2017; Booysen, 2016; van der Westhuizen, 2016b). Zary Motaung was one of the students who critiqued the democratic settlement. She was an African student, a member of a campus choir, and came from a metropole area in Gauteng. She was living with her mother, who was a retired nurse. She commuted to the university in her own car, and while she financed her first year of studies with a loan, she qualified for NSFAS for her second year. Talking about Nelson Mandela, she said, "I would say he sold us out, coz all we got was freedom and the initial fights weren't for the control over the economy." Despite her challenge of the political settlement which she argued was orchestrated by Nelson Mandela, Zary Motaung did not question the exceptionality of his character and personality.

With the rising challenge to the legacy of Nelson Mandela and other past figures, their relevance to the youth may be decreasing. While Nelson Mandela did feature in my interviews, he was not an omnipresent figure and was not the readily cited inspirational political elite I had assumed prior to the commencement of my data collection. When I asked Arnetia, a Coloured student, member of a sports team and a sports coach off campus, from the Western Cape, about inspirational individuals in her life, she described many people in her private life and in her family. She spoke about friends who ran away from life of drugs and gangs, and parents who worked hard to show her that she can achieve things in spite of the racial stereotypes that faced her. In response to my query about any famous people, she said, "everyone looks up to Nelson Mandela, so who am I [not to]? [laugh]." Her response hints at the clear benchmark that Nelson Mandela has become as a political leader-elite, yet in reality, he may no longer speak so directly and readily to the lives that the young people lived nearly 25 years since he became the president.

Writing about Nelson Mandela's legacy, Dion Forster (2016) argues that the "loss of faith" in people like Nelson Mandela, has potentially positive effects for South Africa. He proposes that it compels South Africans to see themselves as agents of change and it forces the youth in particular to become more active. Many

political commentators and leading figures also maintained that South African public's reliance on leaders has facilitated the crisis in the country and hence citizens needed to perceive themselves as leaders, and take action (Madonsela, 2017; Mashele and Qobo, 2014). However, as a result of the persona-focus, much of the political action has tended to be individual orientated, rather than systematic as I show in Chapter Three. For example, the citizen activism against corruption and state capture in 2016 – 2017 focused on President Jacob Zuma as the embodiment of the problem. This was the case in the opposition led campaign #ZumaMustFall (Sangham, 2017), or the EFF-led call for Zuma to 'pay back the money' for Nkandla upgrades. The numerous, failed votes of no confidence in Zuma also personified the systematic corruption in the individual or his immediate circle (Suttner, 2016c). However, many of the students in my research combined the individual and systematic views on corruption. On one hand, they acknowledged its deep-rooted structural feature, and on the other, the need to remove the president, as the highest leader, from office.

The distinctions and connections between eliteness and leadership and its generational separations within the political realm described in this section have complex implications for youth engagement in politics and their identification. On one hand, young people are expected to meet the idolised narratives of ethical leadership qualities of the struggle era. They see older generations in power and are not exposed to many of their age peers entering the formal political spaces; and even those in positions of power, are not being praised for successfully meeting the historical benchmarks and being elites – leaders with superior qualities that would be worth emulating. Consequently, the students are faced with discourses and norms which undermine their aspirations towards leadership within the highest, 'elite' realm of formal national politics, and thus diminish their leadership aspirations to a localised level. On the other hand, however, the current elites being presented as failing at leadership expectations offers an opportunity. It opens for the students and the youth some room to consider engaging with politics and thus challenging the existing order and those in power by seeking to do better than those in power.

The generational/age-based differentiations around eliteness and leadership are further paralleled with distinctions between the BF and struggle generations rooted in materialistic self-interest. Materialism and conspicuous consumption are associated with the post-apartheid era and thus are attached to the BF youth in particular, as well as with social climbers as represented by new elites and middle classes, which I explore in the following section.

Eliteness as Being Middle or Working Class

The Black elites and the Black MC in South Africa are connected to each other on several fronts. Firstly, the understanding of Black elites as exceptional individuals, leaders of the society and the driving force of change, as mentioned in Chapter Four, is currently applied to the growing BMC instead. BMC is often vested with the potential to transform the South African society because of their skills, education, employment and their desire for higher level social and political goods (Everatt 2016a), which were previously attached to the Black African elite. Based on democratic theory from other geo-political contexts, it was assumed that the BMC would enhance South African democracy because it was expected to shift political allegiance from the ANC, with which it was aligned in the anti-apartheid struggle, and thus challenge its one-party dominance. The 2016 municipal election results and the rise of the DA in urban metropolises, could provide some validity to this theory. In light of the election results, David Everatt (2016a) argues that the traditionalist faction behind President Zuma was not gaining traction amongst people who were “becoming better educated, more Afropolitan and cosmopolitan, demanding high quality services and choice in everything from politics to personal trainers.”

However, the BMC in South Africa arose primarily on the back of public sector employment, and only a small proportion emerged via a business and private sector route, as was envisioned in the aforementioned BEE policies. Due to its ties to the ANC-operated patronage system and the public sector, it is argued that the BMC does not want to risk its favourable status quo tied to the ruling party. Equally importantly, due to the persistent experiences of racial discrimination and inequality in the workplace, many BMC voters reject the DA as the embodied

white party, or support it only opportunistically as a rebellion vote, rather than a vote based on political conviction and identification (Ngoma, 2016; Southall 2016; Mattes, 2015). Moreover, some members of the elite and the MC also built their wealth as ‘tenderpreneurs’ – individuals who have amassed their riches on the back of winning government tenders. Tenderpreneurs are the embodiment of the ANC-associated corruption and the rise of the (counter)elite,³³ which are both tied to the public sector and the state (Southall, 2014; von Holdt, 2013). Hence, although there is a substantial amount of dissatisfaction with the ANC, many educated, globally minded students remain loyal to the party even if they do not vote for it.

The confusing nature of the BMC-elite discourses is further accentuated by the different lived experiences within the MC, because of the precarious nature of some of the occupations that tend to be grouped under this label. Schotte, Zizzamia and Leibbrandt (2017) call this the ‘vulnerability’ of the MC, meaning that its MC status is not secure and is subject to change, for example due to the loss of employment. This understanding can be seen as a version of the precariat, that Guy Standing (2011, 11-16) explains as a class in the making, which emerges as a result of globalisation and growing fragmentation of traditional social stratification. Precariat is unique or non-conforming with the typical approaches to understanding both class and status, because it is marked by insecurity and instability with regards to issues such as labour market, skills reproduction, income or representation (Standing 2011, 17) leading for example to a discord between education levels and wages. Similarly to this notion of insecurity of the precariat, Schotte, Zizzamia and Leibbrandt (2017) argue that the MC should be split between the stable and the vulnerable MC, with employment status, gender and other factors substantially impacting one’s ability to maintain the MC position. Similar distinctions within the BMC can be seen in the works of Southall (2016) and Seekings and Nattrass (2015), who also point out the different opportunities afforded to bank till workers, teachers, and senior managers in SOEs, all of whom are considered BMC.

³³ The term counter-elite does not denote here a negative value judgement, but a group that is challenging the existing elite and is synonymous with terms such as the ‘elite wannabes’ (Thurlow and Jaworski, 2017a; 2017b) or the ‘nouveaux rich’ (Daloiz, 2007).

The occupational differences within the middle class also bring to the fore the category of ‘working class,’ which is used in popular self-identification, political debates and economic analyses. Guy Standing argues that the working class or the proletariat in recent history meant:

workers in long-term, stable, fixed-hour jobs with established routes of advancement, subject to unionisation and collective agreements, with job titles their fathers and mothers would have understood, facing local employers whose names and features they were familiar with (2014, 10).

In the South African context, however, working class self-identification and perceived belonging also contravenes the traditional approaches to class designation. For example, Ichharam (2006) finds that informal female garment workers identify themselves with the working class without formal, contractual employment relationships, the same way as formally employed educated professionals, such as teachers and other public sector employees (Ngoma, 2016). Thus, being a ‘worker’ encompasses a wide range of people with different employment statuses and in various professions with diverse lived realities. Workers then range from domestic workers, who continue to be the backbone of South African households, through to miners and farm labourers, to student workers in the university departments. Despite the wide range of self-identifications, however, in light of the lack of structural changes to the economy, the category has largely been racialised as Black African. As Ngoma (2016, 177) points out, “The working class denotes a racial category in South Africa, therefore, identity construction along the working class lines dovetails with racial and Black solidarity,” which explains why many members of the Black MC see themselves more as working class, and why my research participants rarely attributed the working-class identity to white South Africans.

The self-perceived ‘worker’ identity is partially created by the political obfuscation of leftist rhetoric and rightist politics pursued by the ANC. The phrase “talk left-walk right” spearheaded by the South African scholar activist Patrick Bond, has become widely used to describe the ANC neoliberal capitalist

politics, hidden by the populist Marxist rhetoric. The close ties of the ANC with labour-related structures in the Tripartite Alliance, namely the South African Communist Party (SACP) and COSATU (Confederation of South African Trade Unions), have facilitated this obfuscating of class identities. Their cooperation enabled the ANC to claim the close ties to the working class and to use its partner structures for voter mobilisation (Plaut, 2014). For example, during the 2017 ANC policy conference, the party re-committed itself as “a broad church, a multi-class movement with a strong bias to the working class and the poor” (Zuma, 2017). Nonetheless, the Alliance came under considerable strain under the presidency of Jacob Zuma and by late 2016, COSATU’s support for the president diminished in light of the state capture revelations. Many COSATU member organisations joined the call for the president to step down, while at the same time COSATU was critiqued for enabling Zuma’s rise to power in 2007, hence, bearing some blame for the status quo (Hamill, 2017).

COSATU was also criticised by the so-called progressive left academics over its lack of protection of workers in the 2016 – 2017 negotiations over the national minimum wage bill and several labour-related laws around strikes and dispute negotiations. The high levels of unemployment and the large scale job-shedding in key sectors such as mining and agriculture, which offered jobs predominantly for low-skilled workers, also show the lack of protection of some members of the working class (Yu, Kasongo and Moses, 2016). These academics, for instance Carin Runciman (2017), Andries Bezuidenhout (2017) or Patrick Bond (2017b), link the unfavourable legal changes to the transformation in the composition of much of the unions’ leadership and membership, as over the last two decades unions have become more professionalised, skilled and managerial. As Bezuidenhout (2017) puts it “South Africa’s trade union federation had become a home for middle class civil servants, rather than a working class federation.” His observation is further substantiated by the description that Schotte, Zizzamia and Leibbrandt (2017) provide of the South African middle class. They suggest that a stable MC member is most likely to be “male, African, about 46 years old, has completed secondary education, is employed with a *permanent work contract and union coverage*, and the household is likely to reside in an urban area in

Gauteng province, where Johannesburg and Pretoria are located” [my emphasis] (2017, 4). Their findings thus demonstrate the changing nature of the unions away from the low-skilled, less educated workers towards educated middle class professionals.

Consumption & Economic Wellbeing

In addition to democratic change, middle classness is also associated with improved economic wellbeing in comparison to the Black African poor, who represent the majority of the country’s population. As conspicuous consumption of the BMC has dominated the perceptions and analysis of the BMC (Khunou, 2015), the BMC is easily conflated with the idea of Black elite. As only a fraction of Black Africans benefited from BEE and other affirmative action policies extensively in economic terms in comparison to the large number of the poor, the BMC is similar to the elite because it is small in size, yet it has both perceived and real economic power vis-à-vis the poor. Thus, the distinction between the BMC and the elite might be rather arbitrary from the perspective of the poor or primarily analytical in use, in the context of the lived realities of my research participants.

In the case of the BMC in South Africa, conspicuous consumption can be framed as an attempt of the emerging or aspiring elite to portray the markers of elite distinction, which however, becomes an exercise in pretence, because it is often not backed by the appropriate economic power. Hence, the displays of class markers are rooted in high levels of credit and debt (James, 2014). Due to the role of comparisons and perceptions, being middle class and being elite may be based on perceived similar lifestyles. Sarah Nuttall describes the conflation mechanism behind class status in her analysis of what she calls the Y-Generation culture, as exhibited in the Johannesburg suburb of Rosebank. She argues that, “The stylizations of the self... are based on a delicate balance between actual emerging lifestyles of middle-class black youth and the politics of aspiration.” (2004, 439) Hence, no matter whether it is labelled as middle class or elite, class status is experienced and perceived differently, depending on where one lies on

the spectrum of disempowerment and empowerment vis-à-vis the neoliberal economy.

Posel and Casale (2011) find that amongst Black Africans, unlike whites, there is a higher level of discrepancy between perceived and actual economic standing. In other words, more of those who are in the top third of wealth perceive themselves as either middle income or poor, which the authors attribute to the lack of information about the economic situation against the whites (2011, 206, 215). Study by Phadi and Ceruti (2011) similarly shows that Sowetans with a vastly different economic and employment backgrounds consider themselves to be middle class and highlight that a common theme in their identification is a notion of affordability/consumption, which is, however, based on comparisons which can be either upward or downward orientated. Moreover, the Sowetans' comparisons are not limited only to a reference group that is 'like them' but are informed by a broader awareness of others' situation. One of my African participants living in a township in Gauteng, Nomthandanzo, demonstrates this point quite well. At 19, she was living with her parents and brothers, and was a mother to a baby boy. She was studying to become a community worker, hoping to help others in the future. When she was describing her living situation, she said she felt privileged because unlike many other people living in townships, she had never gone hungry, because her mother had always made sure that she and her brothers were fed, and that they even had cake to celebrate big achievements. Similarly, white South Africans, especially Afrikaners, have sought to establish themselves against the global structures of whiteness, leading to the perception of other (white) people being better off than them (Steyn, 2001) and there being another elite class with whom to compare. Ultimately, this leads to a distorted understanding of economic realities and positionalities against other South Africans.

Inequality combined with pretence status markers is also visible at UJ. Observing students, it may seem that the reputation of UJ as an institution for the working-class/poor is at odds with the self-representation of the students or that the class make-up of the student body is not as skewed towards the lower percentiles as it

might be suggested in popular imagery of the institution. While some UJ students are certainly economically well off, others only portray certain status through their urban chic fashion choices and use of tech accessories, while the reality of their economic disposition remains hidden. Some students are on one hand dependent on charity funded meals provided by the NGO Gift of the Givers, and others are preparing for their next holiday trip to Europe or have the latest MacBook Air in their designer bag. Many of my interviewees spoke about times both as young children and while at varsity, when they did not have enough money to buy food at the end of month before their parents send them another instalment of pocket money or being without a phone – and thus not responding to my WhatsApp messages – because it broke down and they just could not afford to replace it. According to a 2017 Student Spend Report (Student Village, 2017), Black African students spent most money on clothing and jewellery, followed by groceries and airtime/data. Students from the remaining racial groups on the other hand spend most on groceries (albeit more than Black African students), followed by clothing and pay TV. This spending break-down fits with the narrative, suggesting that the youth has bought into consumerist culture and is too preoccupied with material things.

While the BMC and youth literature does not frequently frame the issues of consumption and displays of wealth through a gendered lens, one can clearly see the connection with the Black African masculinity debates from Chapter Three, which result in the inability of many young men to reach the expected markers of adult masculinity. The idea of 'Black Diamond' (Mda, 2009) is probably most illustrative of the class bearings on masculinity, as the term refers to Black African men who have become rich after the end of apartheid. They have been able to afford a lavish life style, demonstrated most stereotypically in their fashion choices, luxury cars and residences in gated communities and expensive neighbourhoods such as Sandton. Vincent (2006) draws attention to the pressures on Black African men to display their masculinity outwardly through clothing or their pose in contrast to the white Afrikaner men, who are able to appear 'unkept' and 'careless', because of their self-assured status. It is certainly a difference one can observe when walking around UJ.

The feminine parallel to the Black Diamond masculinity emerged in my discussion with Tshiamo, who captured it in our chat over racial divides on campus. When I asked her whether she had white friends and whether she interacted with white students beyond the classroom setting, she said she did not:

Tshiamo: Because they [white students] tend to segregate themselves from us, coz we don't have beautiful cars, they're like the 'it' girls, and I'm like, you know what [claps], I can't do that.

Ján: You don't think you're the 'it' girl?

Tshiamo: No! I'm not! [laugh] No I'm not [shock/ offended] I don't even look like an 'it' girl.

Ján: How does an 'it' girl look like?

Tshiamo: Ah, like the flashing money, they've got beautiful phones, they've got their car keys, so whenever we're talking, they'll be like, guys, what time is it? I have to leave - the traffic. And I'm like, I use a Megabus [silent voice] [laugh].

Ján: [claps] But is it an issue of race? Is it more of a class [issue]?

Tshiamo: No, it's not an issue of race.

Ján: Do you have Black girls who do that?

Tshiamo: Yes.

Ján: [laugh]

Tshiamo: You do!

Ján: Tell me!

Tshiamo: So, those kind of Black girls, those are the ones who hang out with those kind of white people, and Indian, yes, but I don't think it's a biggie, coz... there are different levels of life, I'm not there yet.

Tshiamo's final statement shows a contradiction that underpins the notion of eliteness. On one hand, she is critical of the 'it' girls, yet it appears that she might want to become one of them. The status thus represents a mixture of economic wellbeing, which is attractive and desired, but it also presents other traits which are contradicting the normative expectations and which, therefore, discipline the drive towards eliteness to a level that does not challenge the structures keeping those in power.

The disciplinary power against the intersectionally defined elite identification emerged during my interview with a second-year psychology student from

Gauteng. The student had heard about my research in 2016, when I came to recruit participants in one of her classes, but she had decided not to join. She told me that at the time she had not been convinced by my presentation, and did not take me seriously, but was only persuaded to come and talk to me after being asked by one of her friends. During our interview she suggested that I could have asked others to speak on my behalf during the lecture to gain more credibility. Despite her original hesitation, however, she engaged fully and critically with the issues that we discussed and was very open-minded about the idea of privilege and economic inequality in the country. Being Indian, she was mindful of the fact that her position was better than many of her Black African fellow students. She was very empathetic about their life struggles and was aware of the poverty that many of them experienced. I remember thinking it was refreshing that unlike many other students I had spoken to before, and who described themselves as middle class, she openly said she was “upper middle class.” When she elaborated on her lifestyle, however, it seemed as if she were downplaying her economic circumstances by describing herself as middle class instead of elite. She spoke of her high school education where one year cost more than her entire university degree at UJ – she said her parents were saving money by her coming to UJ. She was a member of a prestigious club of students, who were being groomed to be future leaders and go abroad. She told me about properties that her family owned, both in and outside of Johannesburg, including one up North where her father went to play golf. She disliked going to the shopping centre by the APK campus, where many students did their shopping, but preferred shopping malls in upscale Sandton.

What the student’s story underscores is her inability or unwillingness to be seen as elite and hence similarly to the elite-leader connection, shows the desire of the elites to adopt downward social identification and mask difference. Therefore, the student’s self-characterisation should not come as a surprise in light of the historic practices and ongoing trends in South Africa, which are reinforced by the criticism of the elites in the global context of a post-Bernie Madoff, 99% and Panama Papers world. Moreover, class pretence as a response to difference, be it upward or downward, can also be understood as yet another element fuelling

the culture of mistrust that characterises South Africa, which impacts the ability and desire of students to identify role models amongst elite women.

What the discourses so far show is that elites are linked and often conflated with middle classes as a result of the specific historical processes of change that have been taking place in South Africa since the end of apartheid, which are underpinned in HE. The intersection of education, wealth, status and social mobility narratives can best be seen in the example of France Bourgouin's (2012) study on African transnational capitalists in Johannesburg. Bourgouin focuses on foreign- educated Black Africans in their late 20s to mid 40s, recruited to work in the city. She argues that their lifestyle displaying wealth and excess was a form of identity-building around performing the expected behaviour of capitalist predators, who are cosmopolitan because they are not tied to one place, but follow global capital and thus are not parochial or local. In this way, they differentiate themselves from other classes as well as other international elites. Bourgouin concludes:

they [transnational African capitalists] stand in contrast to the generation of African elite ahead of them; their fathers and uncles who are often stereotyped as nepotistic, rent seeking, and corrupt African political elite. On the other hand, they *earned* their privilege through the *merit* of their success at internationally renowned business schools and by their *skills and talent* as young professionals in the *global finance sector* [original emphases] (2012, 69).

Rachel Spronk (2014) studies a similar cohort of young urban professionals in Nairobi. The 'yuppies' that she follows were in different kinds of professions from Bourgouin's capitalists; however, according to her, they were middle class because of their education and occupations, their consumption patterns and their sense of modernity. She argues that unlike the elites, these urbanites needed education to achieve their status, rather than being able to rely on opportunities afforded to them by their families' economic status. The transnational capitalists and the urban yuppies certainly differ in the extent of their conspicuous consumption-based lifestyles underpinned by their disposable income. However, they are both assumed to be educated to university level,

achieving their status, and see themselves as bearers of modernity and prestige. These values mirror the qualities and expectations that students at UJ associated both with middle classness for themselves and eliteness for female political elites.

The tensions and confluences between eliteness and middle classness, as well as the values and characteristics associated with the class terminology, can be observed in the debates around education institutions and Fallist activism, which I outline in the following section. The close interaction between student politics and daily experiences within HE context make the debates of eliteness, leadership and middle classness in HE particularly pertinent for the understanding of the emancipative potential of FPEs.

Eliteness and Middle Classness: Wits vs. UJ

Eliteness is a significant feature within the South African education system. The use of the term mirrors the class and racialised narratives that are associated with eliteness more broadly (Badat and Sayed, 2014). Within the secondary education, it is most visible with regards to the so-called “former Model C schools,” which were institutions historically reserved for white students during apartheid and which had since been converted to either private or public, mixed-raced schools. Due to the long-term, state-sponsored support, these schools had the resources to build a reputation of high student achievement and success, as well as exclusivity, inaccessibility and unavailability for the majority of the Black population. Thus, Model C schools became elite institutions. Many of these schools have not been fully transformed in their institutional practices, as I demonstrate in more detail on the case of Pretoria Girls’ High in Chapter Eight. Therefore, the racially and socio-economically charged language surrounding former Model C schools has continued. For example, NDZ infamously attacked the schools during one of her campaign speeches in 2017; saying they were racist places where young people were being taught to be critical of the ANC (du Preez, 2017). Thus, many former Model C schools, especially those that operate

on high student fees, maintain a level of exclusivity and exclusion, which is juxtaposed to many poorly resourced and ailing public schools in quintiles 1-3.³⁴

In the realm of HE, historically white universities such as Wits, UCT or Stellenbosch University also continue to be perceived as elite institutions. Eliteness of these institutions is both a form of economic exclusion and high status or prestige, which is rooted in the universities' academic excellence.³⁵ In the economic realm, eliteness underscores that costs of fees prevent many students from pursuing studies at these institutions, despite the fact that they qualify with their admissions point scores, or as some FMF activists and supporters put it, even if they are 'academically deserving'. Many of my respondents confirmed the economic obstacle when they explained their decision to come to UJ. Wits was for many of them the main alternative to UJ because of its location in Johannesburg. Those students who were accepted to their desired programmes at Wits and chose to come to UJ instead, did so, they said, because of the financial implications, while some said that they did not even bother applying to Wits, knowing that they could not even afford the registration fees, let alone the tuition. The FMF call to remove high costs of education was thus framed as a demand to remove structural barriers which keep the (predominantly white, but also Black) elites in power through education and by extension through economic and employment opportunities.

As most elite universities are formerly white institutions, the notions of academic excellence and achievement continue to be inherently racialised as

³⁴ It must be acknowledged that there were also elite schools for Black Africans during apartheid, such as the Inanda Seminary in KZN, which was a former missionary boarding school for girls. As Healy Clancy (2014) argues, the institution was allowed to prepare girls to pursue professions such as nursing and teaching, because they were needed by the regime and because girls were seen as less politically dangerous than Black African men. According to the author, the institution was seen by Black Africans as a special place of protection for black bourgeois and "preparation for social mobility" (2014, 174).

³⁵ In this section I focus solely on public or state-subsidised universities. In South Africa as elsewhere, there are also private HE institutions, which are considerably more expensive than public institutions. One private university that students mentioned in my research was Monash University, where several of them had applied, but if they got accepted and chose not to attend, it was primarily due to costs. However, the controversy around eliteness is not associated with these private institutions as it is with some of the public universities, not least because of the fact that the latter are state-subsidised, historically white and enjoy high levels of international and domestic recognition for academic excellence.

white. Although these perceptions have been challenged by Fallists and others within the university spaces, who build on a long history of anti-colonial thought, the racial differences are still embedded in the thinking of many students. One interesting example emerged during the students' debate over the aforementioned leadership succession within the DA. Students in an FGD were questioning why a capable, young Black African woman like Lindiwe Mazibuko, who held the highest opposition post in Parliament between 2011-2014, did not replace Helen Zille at the helm of the party. The spat and the fall-out between the two politicians over Mazibuko's ability and readiness to lead the party, be it within Parliament in 2011 or nationally after the 2014 elections, was partially revived during the time of my data collection, as Zille (2016) published her memoirs, in which she shares her perceptions of their relationship and how the events unfolded. While focusing on the issue of competition between women and especially between women of different generations and races that the Zille-Mazibuko incident manifested, Arya proposed:

I think it's because... most of the things in South Africa, stem back from the apartheid history. Helen Zille, I think, saw it difficult to trust a Black person [Mazibuko] because of the education system. So, you [Mazibuko] had Black education, so I [Zille] received... better education than you, so whatever you're proposing it's still [inferior].

As the conversation continued, other students suggested that it was not a question of education, as Mazibuko received her university degree after the end of apartheid, and hence, did not suffer from the inferior Bantu (Black African) education system. The debate about the incident shows that the students continued to be emotionally and intellectually challenged by the racist apartheid legacy and its impacts on the notion of eliteness and quality of HE institutions.

The economic factors underpinning one's ability to study at the so-called elite universities led many students to make assumptions of what kind of students attend institutions like Wits, transposing the aforementioned elite values onto the students who attend them. As one of my interviewees put it, she did not want to go to Wits, because she believed 'Witsies' thought that they were "better than

others.” This student was from a Coloured township in Gauteng and was a member of a day house at APK but was not active in other organisations. Her father dropped out of university and ended up starting his own business, while her mother was an accountant. Her parents were divorced and she felt closer to her father because she struggled with her mother’s relationship with her racial identity, which amplified her negative views of Wits as a white institution. Her mother went to RAU, UJ’s predecessor, because it was a white institution at the time. According to the student, her mother thought of herself as white, and did not want her daughter to go to a Black African school that UJ has become, but to a better, white institution. Hence, her decision to come to UJ was an act of rebellion against whiteness as a measure of excellence and an embrace of her Coloured identity.

The student’s story demonstrates the widely held assumption that the majority of the students at Wits are from rich family backgrounds, are primarily white or ‘coconuts’ and perceive themselves as superior to others – the main signs of elitism. These views of Wits students exist despite the fact that it has increased its Black African student population dramatically since the end of apartheid. According to the 2015 enrolment data, nearly 70% of the students at Wits were Black (Sooful, 2015). Descriptive and numerical transformation of the student body has been the easiest form of transformation to achieve from the perspective of HE institutions, while changes to the academic staff and the curriculum are lagging behind (Daniels and Damons, 2011). Hence, the racialised view of a Wits student is more a matter of historical baggage than a reflection of the current status quo, while changes to the students’ class and racial identifications and consciousness remain debated.

The last element of the elite discourses around Wits is well summarised by Kiara. When I interviewed her in February 2017, she was in her second year and joined a community engagement group as a volunteer. She had her eyes set on becoming a brand manager for a fashion and beauty house, such as Coco Chanel. She was from a township in Gauteng and was very proud of being from a hip and happening location. Kiara lived with her mother, grandmother and her brother,

and while her mother only had a matric, her sisters were advocates (higher-level legal counsellors), so her university career was not unprecedented in her family. She started her studies without funding, but by the second year she was able to get NSFAS and was preparing to move into on-campus residence. When we discussed the financial claims made by FMF protesters, she mentioned the media focus on Wits and other HWUs over formerly underprivileged institutions (Hodes, 2017), where the activists also experienced violent clashes with authorities, but did not have sufficient social and political clout to attract attention. I asked if she would have wanted to go to Wits instead of UJ:

Kiara: Yeah, I did want to go to Wits, because it's like, when you say you are at Wits, they treat you differently.

Ján: Oh, OK, in what way?

Kiara: Like, when you say you're at Wits ... they assume, ah [kiss-teeth] you're better, you are an A student, coz like Wits is known for that, you're an A-student, you're a nerd, and stuff like that...

Ján: So, do you want that? Or you don't want to be [that]?

Kiara: Yeah, I don't want to be treated like that.

Ján: Isn't it good to have a status like 'I am from an elite school, I'm going to Wits'?

Kiara: Yah, you're from Wits, but then what? Yah, I am from UJ, but I'm doing this, and this, and that, so it's just like, it's just a status, it's just a status that's been put up by the public and somehow people fear students from Wits, like, 'ooh, Wits', like you know, and then it's like UJ, ah, UJ ..., ah, it is a nice school.

Kiara's answers show that Wits' elite status was also associated with its academic reputation, as much as it was about economic exclusion³⁶. Moreover, the reference to people fearing Wits students hints to the differences in students' political behaviour, which has been made prominent by Fallist activism, and which was also rooted in the socio-economic profile of the student body.

Reflecting the abovementioned discourses about the democratising potential of the middle classes, which has arguably not materialised (Mattes, 2015) some academics and commentators argued that the working-class and poor background of UJ students meant that they were not as politically and radically

³⁶ Increasingly the description and identification of Wits and other HWU as elite is being replaced by labels as 'research-focused' or 'research-intensive' to maintain the positive attributes of academic excellence and distinction, while hiding the elite label and its negative connotations.

minded as their middle class/elite counterparts at Wits. Most students at UJ were allegedly not willing to put their education in danger, knowing that their degrees were a tool of social mobility for them and their families. They were not going to risk the future wellbeing of their families for political goals, which would benefit primarily the future generations of students, and were consequently less likely to take politically-related risks in comparison to their wealthier counterparts. Many students I spoke to were aware of this perception of UJ students and the 'bad' reputation that the university got amongst FMF activists, because UJ APK was one of the last campuses to join the national protests in 2015. At the same time, however, several students said that they had chosen to come to UJ because it was seen as less violent and protest-ready than Wits, making it into a positive element of UJ character. Moreover, because of the relative affordability of the university fees and the financial assistance that many students receive, they were less likely to see FMF as a political cause to support. Other factors contributing to the varying levels of political activism include Wits' institutional culture based on the history of anti-apartheid political activism and the aforementioned 'authoritarian' approach to protest of VC Rensburg and the management at UJ.

In a seemingly paradoxical way, some argue that many Fallists were not the wealthy socially-protected individuals, but the poorest and the most marginalised students, who joined because they had nothing to lose. This observation underscores yet again the difficulty of categorising students into various socio-economic classes, as their lived experiences of poverty, precariousness and opportunity vary. The class profile of a Fallist student, therefore, tends to be either a poor and marginalised Black African student or an elite/middle class student. KG, an African/Black male student activist in his final year of studies, summarised this observation during one of my focus groups:

Kids of the working class parents, Black parents especially, you know, how afraid they are to be involved because if I get suspended... I have three younger sisters to take care of [taps on the table], and all those things, ... She [Shaeera Kalla] didn't have that [to] worry about. She could put her *face* on the line, her reputation of the line, you know, her body on the line, because she can go back and dad will be like, no, let's go to UCT or you know,

better off, let's take you to Australia next year, so you can go and finish off.

In his statement, KG, who was from the North West province, referred to a student activist Shaeera Kalla, who together with Ulo Mkhathshwa, became prominent female figures in the FMF in 2015 at Wits. Both women were ANC members of the SRC and as KG's statement reveals, they were at times criticised and delegitimised for their elite upbringing, which referred to both their financial standing as well as the political connections of their families (Furlong, 2016; NemaKonde, 2015). Shaeera continued to be a dominant FMF figure during my fieldwork, while Ulo became largely discredited. Many activists and academics I spoke to mentioned that students believed Ulo was profiting from her FMF role by building her personal brand and putting the collective interest and views secondary to her personal agenda (Gillespie, 2015). In this way, her eliteness fit in with the narrative of selfishness and greed.

In addition to being discredited by their elite status, some student leaders within FMF and in HE more broadly, were accused of being sell-outs, because they worked closely with the university management and/or without the endorsement of the wider student body. Some students were specifically accused of being paid off by the management to stop causing trouble. Hence, they were seen to have sold the ideals for personal gain. For example, when I attended the student engagements with the VC at UJ, the UJ APK SRC was challenged by the audience members about their collaboration with the university management. In September 2016, for example, student society representatives sat on a panel as key voices of the student body. However, many audience members thought that they should not be engaging with the management, while other student leaders were suspended in connection to the arson of the auditorium. Hassled by calls from the audience, the students were intimidated into leaving the stage.

Fallism emphasised as part of its ideological grounding, a horizontal, so-called 'leaderless' structure, and the importance of direct democracy. Consequently, many FMF branches, including the ones at Wits and UJ, were critical of SRC members who were either positioned as FMF leaders or presented themselves as

its key leaders (Becker, 2016; Kamanzi, 2016; Pithouse, 2016; Satgar, 2016). Funzani, a Black woman activist and member of a political organisation at UJ, was an honours student from a township in Gauteng. Although she was very active, and I frequently saw her addressing crowds of students during protests in October 2016, she wanted to be understood as one of *many* leaders, rather than a single individual, who tried to position herself as the voice of FMF. For her, it went against the spirit of the 'movement' and against the collective decision to embrace a flat organisational/membership structure. Angela Davis³⁷ (2016) summarised this perspective by proposing that FMF was not leader-less, but leader-full, with many strong Black African women fighting against racism and patriarchy in HE and the wider South African society. The leader-full narrative captures more accurately the aforementioned elite-leader link, as it recognises the positive-side of leadership, but denounces hierarchy of eliteness, which would suggest superiority, privilege and power over others.

The FMF-induced debates about race and class in HE have contributed to the positive value associated with being middle class. The favourable notion of middle classness can be seen in the praise that many students expressed towards UJ management and/ or the government for pushing through the 'Missing Middle' agenda.³⁸ For example, UJ ran a fundraising campaign for the Missing Middle (University of Johannesburg, 2016a) while the government featured 'Missing Middle' in its HE funding policy announced in September 2016. The policy was proposed as a compromise between the demands for free HE as furthered by some FMF proponents, and the concerns over financial sustainability expressed primarily by universities' leadership. The government agreed to cover fee increases of up to 8% for the students who came from

³⁷ The Black feminist scholar, Angela Davis, delivered the 2016 annual Steve Biko lecture at the University of South Africa (UNISA), where she addressed the students and commented on their activism, international connections to BlackLivesMatter and inter-generational relations amongst social justice activists.

³⁸ Students who belonged into the so-called Missing Middle were not able to receive funding from NSFAS, hence, they were not poor enough, or they were not able to prove to be poor enough, to have their fees paid; but equally, they were not rich enough to pay for their tuition and other costs themselves, without acquiring loans or bursaries. Several students I spoke to mentioned that they knew people who, or they themselves, had to lie on their NSFAS applications in order to qualify for funding. Many FMF supporters, therefore, critiqued NSFAS because they said it forced Black African people to document and prove their poverty, which robbed them of their dignity.

households with an income below ZAR 600,000 a year (approximately GBP 32,000). Students who were above the income bracket were expected to pay the increased tuition on their own, while poor students who qualified for NSFAS would have their entire tuition covered by the state through the scheme.

This policy was welcomed by most of the students, whether they benefitted from the NSFAS scheme or not. The underlying assumption was that it was undeniable that the state should be taking care of the poorest, but it should not be forgetting those in the middle, where many South Africans think they belong. The notion of being in the 'middle', was not only positive for those from the lower classes, who could see it as an aspirational category into which they could ascend. Many students, whose described life style could be seen in economic terms as upper class or elite, did not label themselves as such, mirroring the aforementioned findings by Mosa Phadi and Claire Ceruti (2011) amongst others.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have highlighted the conflation and contradictions surrounding the students' perceptions of eliteness. These paradoxes stem from the term's designation of prestige and superior status on one hand, and greed and corruption on the other, which are rooted in economic self-interest of an unclearly defined group, which possesses power and influence. Students' initial instinct to reject eliteness as a form of exceptionalism was, however, nuanced firstly as a result of re-formulating eliteness through the prism of leadership, whereby power and influence lose their selfish connotation. Secondly, acceptance of eliteness was modified by the replacement of eliteness with middle classness, which allowed the students to admit their desire for economic wellbeing and change. As a result of the ongoing post-1994 transformation process, middle classness and eliteness get intertwined through higher education, conspicuous consumerism and precariousness of class positioning.

Nonkululeko, who was a Black master's student from a township in Gauteng and a close friend, articulated the tensions around class identification of university students in an insightful way. She and I would get into frequent arguments about

what was important in life and what made someone successful. As she explained, for someone like her, who had lost her mother at a young age and grew up with a father who did not put food on the table nor had given her money to buy bread, emotional satisfaction came secondary to financial stability when thinking about her future. These thoughts would even lead her to conclude that maybe pursuing a master's degree had not been the best choice for her, because her friends in the townships who were no longer studying but working, were able to buy cars, while she still struggled to make ends meet, working several student jobs and fighting to get scholarships. When I asked her whether being a university student in South Africa meant that she was an elite and whether that made her better than other people, she responded:

That's what people think [that you're an elite and you're better], but at the end of the day, you're still broke, I mean, being in varsity means you're a classless person, ... I don't think you belong to a certain class when you're at university... it's either before or after university that you then begin to integrate into a certain class, ... I'm saying you're classless, because you can either go up or down, yes, there is a high percent of you going up, because if you gonna get a good job and start growing and moving up the rank, but then for some people who don't find jobs, they just go back to either, if they come back from poor background, they go back to the poor background, and they try their best to level up.

Nonkululeko's sentiment echoes the insufficiency of class concepts for university students in South Africa. I have shown in this chapter that due to the aspirational nature of education as a tool of social mobility and change, we can best characterise university students as an exceptional group in South African society, rather than through the prism of eliteness, middle classness or poverty. The identification with change means that there are more 'levels' – as the students say – to be reached, and that there is something exceptional to strive for. These higher levels, or something better and superior, are in essence what eliteness means, even if it is ultimately disguised under the label of leadership and middle classness to avert the negative political and economic associations that the term elite often evokes. Hence, elites serve a similar function as role models and anti-heroes because they enable a vision of the student's ideal self as a particular kind of a leader, whose further qualities are analysed in the following two chapters.

7 Exceptional People: The Deserving and Hard-Working Achievers

Introduction

This chapter offers the analysis of the first set of values, characteristics and behaviours that students attributed to the ideal of an FPE, namely those which are connected to the discourse of *being deserving*. These narratives highlight that eliteness ought to arise from hard work and struggle in order to be deserved, hence, eliteness can be a positive and emancipative ideal if it is achieved and earned. The discourse is manifested in various spheres of students' lives, ranging from social welfare, land ownership, employment, and their immediate context of HE. It has been widely internalised and applied by the students across various positionalities and backgrounds, and is reflected in the students' praise of entrepreneurs and their acceptance of successful female businesswomen as life-journey role models. Moreover, students also expect FPEs to deserve their power and privilege through education and competency and to actively sustain these characteristics throughout their time in their positions of power in order to maintain their deserved exceptionalism. The notion of deserved eliteness thus helps students to legitimise mobility, economic wellbeing and change, similarly to the aforementioned middle-classness and leadership.

Overall, I argue that the discourse of *'being deserving'* exercises disciplinary power over the students' desire for eliteness. By circumscribing their normative expectations of who an elite should be, it seeks to shape their realm of possible change. It works in complementarity with the second discourse of *'remembering where you come from'* to weaken the students' resolve and ability to want to be elite and thus carry out changes which would challenge those in power. At the same time, however, the students' own normative construction of the ideal female political elite based on the anti-heroes they witness in positions of power, facilitates their empowerment. Hence it has the potential to subvert elites who benefit from the status quo. This chapter thus offers insights into power of discourses against the lived realities of the students. It uses different intersectional identities, such as being educated, underpinned by the structures

of gender, race, class and age, and so helps to explain the empowering potential of female political elites.

Who is Deserving? The Impact of Neoliberalism

The welfare system in South Africa, as well as globally, is one of the most prominent examples where the idea of being deserving is central to both popular and policy-level debates. The system of social grants in the country, including old age pension and disability grants, is a deracialised continuation of the apartheid era policies, which sought to help the deserving – white and later some Black – poor (Seekings 2008a). It targets the elderly, the disabled and children and thus individuals, who are considered poor not as a result of their own doing. As Everatt (2008) and Seekings (2008a) show, since the democratic era, there has been a problematic lack of clarity from the ANC on who should be the target of the welfare system, or in other words, who is the most deserving group in South Africa. Whether people are considered deserving is typically adjudicated based on need; for example, who are the poorest of the poor, or who are the most disadvantaged groups. Seekings (2008a) highlights that while historical disadvantage is measured on a group rather than individual level, being deserving of assistance is also impacted by the consideration of one's individual achievement and intent. For example, working age people who are unemployed are not the target beneficiaries of the welfare system, but of the public works schemes. The underlying logic of this distinction is the 'dignity of work' principle, combined with the belief that should a citizen have had the opportunity to work, but did not take the opportunity, and thus showed idleness, they were less deserving of public support.

Due to limited resources, the judgement of who is the most deserving of state assistance is a key policy conundrum. Under President Thabo Mbeki, neoliberal policies shifted the government approaches away from comprehensive welfare. This ideological and rhetorical move occurred together with, and in spite of, the growth of some of the grants, such as child support grant, which was incrementally expanded to include higher age groups. With the emphasis on poor citizens needing to be taught not to wait for handouts, but to be active and help

themselves, the discourses around who deserves welfare are a key component of the ANC building of a 'responsible citizen'. As Pumla Gqola (2015), Richard Pithouse (2018) and others argue, the poor in South Africa are consequently made to feel ashamed and responsible for their poverty and are forced to work hard to get out of their situation. Similarly, Kabeer (2014) warns that the system is based on the lack of recognition of the contribution that is provided by women through unpaid care work and hence based on a lack of understanding of social reproduction as reciprocally deserving of state's protection and support. Although Jacob Zuma ran on a pro-poor populist ticket in opposition to Mbeki, the marginalisation of the poor did not improve under his presidency, despite some changes, such as setting of minimum working wage (Everatt, 2008; Seekings 2008a).

At multiple times since the end of apartheid, it was unsuccessfully proposed that the grants system should be replaced by Basic Income Grant (BIG) (Ferguson, 2010). Some of the arguments in favour of the BIG included the avoidance of the so-called 'Black tax', which means that grants are being used by Black Africans to support their extended social networks rather than to benefit the direct recipients only. BIG would provide money to all South Africans and it would therefore allow people to invest their money instead of sharing it with their networks, which hinders the grant's transformative economic potential. This argument in favour of a welfare mechanism is according to Ferguson (2010) a demonstration that 'neoliberal moves' can be used for pro-poor outcomes. While it might be possible to create such a balance between neoliberal moves and pro-poor outcomes, the dominant neoliberal approaches, which are racialised and gendered, tend to undermine pro-poor social justice, and they shape the context in which students articulated their understanding of who is deserving of social, political and other rewards and benefits.

The issue of land ownership mirrors the neoliberal rhetoric of social welfare and it represented a key societal issue for the students at UJ. In 2016-2017, the EFF continued to put political pressure on the ANC to resolve the land ownership problem in the country, which re-sparked debates about constitutional reforms

that would establish land expropriation without compensation in order to facilitate land redistribution. Various modifications to land legislature were discussed in March 2017, around the annual budget speech, and leading up to the ANC policy conference in July 2017. They included proposals to curb and control foreign land ownership, as well as to re-open the opportunity for South Africans to launch tenure claims, because many South Africans with presumed claims to land, from which they had been dispossessed by colonialism, did not manage to meet the 1998 deadline (Walker, 2014). Thus, the public debates focused predominantly on legal and institutional mechanisms, which would make the process of land redistribution between racial groups more effective.³⁹

According to Walker and Dubb (2013) only 7.5% of previously white owned land was transferred to the state, communal ownership or private Black ownership between 1994 and 2012. However, the true status of land ownership and control in South Africa was often misrepresented and misunderstood amongst the public, not least due to the failure to complete a full land audit and to obtain a full picture of the status quo (Merten, 2017). While the main transfer mechanism had been based on a willing-buyer, willing-seller principle, since 2011 the focus shifted away from facilitating Black ownership towards state ownership with long-term leases to citizens. The policy was meant to provide sufficient land tenure security from the state, while circumventing the issue of limited credit and finances of many poor Black people in rural communities, which prevents them from acquiring land. In practice, however, land reform initiatives fail because of administrative incompetency, under-resourcing of relevant staff, as well as on political interference and corruption, leaving the rural poor without land security and benefitting those with existing economic resources (Hall and Kepe, 2017).

³⁹ These debates should be understood within the larger populist discourse of 'radical economic transformation' and 'white monopoly capital' that arose in South Africa in this period. The ANC and its allies used these discourses as a PR strategy to distract from state capture allegations. The strategy was linked to the aforementioned Gupta family and the public-relations company Bell Pottinger (Johnston, 2017).

The magnitude of the debate on land amongst UJ students became apparent during my first visit to the SRC offices at APK campus. Hoping to meet some student leaders, I entered the offices and asked for people who could help me contacting the societies on campus. While chatting to some students, a young woman approached me and demanded that I 'give back the land'. Without any introductions or prior conversations, with no warning signs or hesitations, she bluntly asked, why I stole her and her people's land and she insisted that I give it back.

Many students in my research, especially Black African women, approached the issue of land ownership through a utilitarian perspective. They argued that land represented an important economic asset, and consequently, it was a source of continued inequality that needed to be addressed; yet, they rejected the idea of expropriation without considering the ability of new owners to use the land and run farms. The popular discourse at the time suggested that many farms, whose ownership was transferred from whites to Blacks, fail. Vumela Advisory Fund, for example, found that 90% of the farmland transferred by 2012, lost its productivity (Odendaal, 2017); which was, however, disputed by others, such as land researchers Ben Cousins and Alex Dubb (2013).

One of the key reasons cited behind the farm failures, was the new owners' lack of resources and capital. Their inability to pay for machinery, seeds, labour and other production inputs differentiated the new, predominantly Black African owners from the previous, presumably commercially successful white farmers. Most of the students, however, focused on a parallel explanation, namely the perceived lack of managerial and technical, agricultural skills amongst the Black Africans. During our debates, many respondents said that if they personally were given some land, they would not have any idea what to do with it, so it would be a waste to give it to them. To these students, land redistribution policy could only be successful, if there were additional support and training provided for the new Black African owners. The key underlying assumption, however, was that the new owners would need to be able to use the land and produce from it, which

echoes the logic associated with deserving welfare, namely, having shown the right effort, intent and achievement (Seekings, 2008a).

At the same time, many students also expressed a more unconditional, ideological standpoint and believed in land redistribution without compensation, as they thought the land had been stolen from its original owners, who were their ancestors and forbearers. They asked for justice and fairness. Even amongst these students, however, there were concerns with the practical implications of such transfers. Hence, these two views – utility and justice – were held concurrently, rather than in strict opposition. Many white students argued that the land should not be confiscated and redistributed without compensation, if at all, because the current owners deserved it through their hard work and productivity. Even if the land had been stolen by previous generations, its current owners should not be punished unfairly. White students thus used similar rationales and discourses as Black African students, albeit from a very different positionality and without much consideration of the greater exploitative economic structures, which were built on the cheap labour of Black Africans. What the shared rationality suggests is the prevalence of values which underscore being deserving as a result of achievement and effort.

Deserving Free Higher Education

Similar attitudes penetrated the debates on free HE, with many students in my research believing it was not an entitlement or a right for all. Many students claimed that should the economy allow it, which it did not at the time, young South Africans should be provided with economic means to pursue their education. On the surface, it appeared that HE was conceived of and articulated as a constitutionally-guaranteed right, especially if one considered the dominant voices of Fallist activists, whose argumentation was rooted in the discourse of rights and relied on the Constitution and the Freedom Charter – one of the key policy documents articulated by the ANC and its allies in the 1950s. However, most students in my research limited the right to free HE to those, who worked hard and were smart enough to come to varsity, or in other words, those who deserved it.

An example of such a view was shared with me by Rumbi, who had lived in South Africa for over a decade but was originally from Zimbabwe. Although she thought of South Africa as her home and was planning to stay, she clearly differentiated herself and other Zimbabweans from South Africans. She was living with her uncle, her mother and her siblings in Gauteng and believed that for a Black African girl like herself, who was a child of immigrants, education was a must. She was finishing her first year at UJ in early 2016 and although she was not an active member of a group or a party, she said she would like to vote, if she had the right. She was critical of other students' views on HE and what she thought was a sense of entitlement:

That's why I don't really agree with this whole #FeesMustFall movement, because I feel like that's also to an extent just a sense of entitlement. You actually have to work hard for the things that you have coz, you know, I come from a country right now, where everyone is leaving because we don't have basic things. ... so I feel like people just want to sit and just get everything. Which isn't fair because that's not how life works. I don't think that's how people should go about things because it makes you very, ... it makes you lazy. I feel like if you never have to work for anything, so you don't appreciate anything that you have.

Seeing things that come easy in life as less-valuable was also reflected in some of the students' conviction that free education would negatively impact their degrees, the quality of their education, and their future employment. Many students believed⁴⁰ that providing free education as a government policy would mean that the university would not have the resources to provide services like free Wi-Fi on campus or to pay the academic staff, who would subsequently emigrate together with the rich youth. This would result in further deterioration of the quality of the South African HE. Others suggested that it would also lead to a decreased value of their degrees on the labour market, because free education would mean that underserving students, who did not work hard or who were not smart enough, would get in. Lulu, a young Black woman from a township in

⁴⁰ It ought to be underscored that students often misunderstood and misrepresented Fallists' objectives. However, I use the students' views not to describe and analyse Fallism, but to reveal the underlying values and beliefs of the students who participated in my research.

Gauteng, held this view. She lived with her grandmother, while her college-educated parents and her sister lived elsewhere. Having her own room, electricity and not going hungry made her self-identify as middle class, which was financed from her grandmother's pension. However, she funded her studies with NSFAS because her father got retrenched and could not pay for her second year. She was soft-spoken and well-read on the latest news, and she was also a member of a society for women. When we were discussing FMF, she critiqued the idea of free education:

It [free education] is not really feasible, because you know, fees are really expensive, so expecting the government to really pay for everything for free, it's gonna make things even more hard than what they are, because I feel like once we go out and look for jobs, then we're gonna earn less, because they're gonna say, 'oh but your education was free, ... you're just gonna have less salary, coz we're paying what you paid for your education'. So, I feel like people should deserve, should be academically and financially deserving to be in a university and people shouldn't just think everything will fall in their lap and everything is cool.

The importance of young people deserving access to HE through hard work can also be seen in the negative perceptions that students held about taking a gap year between high school and university. Many students told me that they were *forced* to take a gap year, because they did not secure a place at varsity, or because they did not have the resources to pay for their education. Taking a gap year then becomes a battle with pressures to avoid sitting at home, because such idle youth are judged and perceived negatively for not contributing towards their upkeep or to the community. For the fear of becoming one of these young people, many of my participants who could do so, sought to get further qualifications, such as their driver's license or computer/typing training, to show that they did not waste the gap year, but remained deserving of going to university, because they were hard workers and they were developing themselves despite adversity.

The impacts of this negative attitude of alleged idleness of the gap year can be seen in the example of two of my participants, Zahra and Umme. Zahra lived in a neighbourhood which she described as nice, quiet and safe. She commuted to UJ from her parents' house and was taken in by car. Her father paid her fees, so

finances were not a concern for her education. She was very self-critical about her gap year experience, because she portrayed herself as falling into the 'worst' category of young women, who did not work or do any training. As she put it, she just watched series on TV, played games and watched other young people trying to be their best. After having struggled with figuring out what she had wanted to do during the gap year, she came to UJ and was in her second year of studies when we met in 2017. There was a sense of self-deprecation in her statements, making it clear that she felt she was not good enough in comparison to others, who used their gap year for self-improvement, or who continued to be engaged in societies and organisations on campus, which she was not.

Umme did not identify with a racial group, but she wanted to be considered South African. Similarly to Zahra, she lived at her parents' house, but she drove herself to campus. She saw herself as privileged and as she put it "well taken care off." She used to play sports, but when I interviewed her during her second year of study in 2017, she was not a member of any clubs or organisations. Umme took a gap year after matric because she did not know what she was passionate about. Afforded the opportunity to use family connections, she had had exposure to various fields of work during her gap year and presented the year as an experience that ultimately led to a positive outcome because she found her passion that she was pursuing in the end. However, when talking about students, and about young people who supported FMF in particular, she was very critical of those who – as she put it – sat around and did nothing. She was convinced that there were opportunities out there that the students should take advantage off, if they did not start studying after matric:

For example, if I say that, OK I just finished matric, but don't have enough money to go to university or college, what else can I do? So, then you either find a learnership or some companies actually do training. if you have a solid plan in your head, regardless of the limited resources that you have, you can do it. The problem I find with a lot of people is that they're lazy and it irritates me. You want all these things, but world owes you nothing. You're entitled to *nothing* and a lot of people don't understand that. They think, 'no I'm a human, I am entitled to this, and this and this, and I'm gonna take it and if I'm not gonna get it, I'm gonna fight'.

Umme's opinions demonstrate the widespread neoliberal iteration of being a hard worker and the expectation that people should be able to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. Some students with a similar mind-set also argued that the government should only provide free education for pupils on primary and secondary level in order to give everyone equal basic opportunities. According to these students, further success or socio-economic wellbeing did not have to be tied to HE. They saw varsity as a choice and hence something that should not be paid for by the government.

The views expressed by Umme and a host of other UJ students show to some extent a lack of awareness or appreciation of structural barriers faced by poor, predominantly Black Africans in the job seeking process. UJ's Centre for Social Development in Africa conducted research into youth employment (de Lannoy and Graham, 2017; 2016), which found that the barriers to employment include for example application costs. Many employers only take paper applications, which means that young people have to travel somewhere, where they can type and print their CVs, which they then have to post. IT-based applications can also be exclusionary for the poor due to the high costs of mobile data, which even led to a campaign #DataMustFall. Moreover, job offers are often only advertised in newspapers or not advertised at all. Applying for newspaper-advertised openings has financial implications and attracts a large number of applicants, making the competition very stiff. On the other hand, not having jobs publicly advertised suggests the need for connections and social networks to learn about possible opportunities, which is also exclusionary.

Based on Umme and Zahra's stories, one could falsely assume that their views were a result of their privileged class positioning. However, students from across racial and economic backgrounds held similar views on the need to do something and not be lazy to prove that one deserves access to higher education. Many students chose to work during their gap year either to save money for their degrees or to get extra income for their own spending, as their parents did not want them to be lazy, even if they could afford to support them. Conversely, there were a few students who did not work, even if their families' financial situation

was not strong. While it may seem paradoxical, their parents and guardians were worried that once these young people started earning money, they would love the material things that they could then afford and would decide not to go to university at all. Their warning was thus based on their fear that students would become stuck in low paying jobs for the rest of their lives and would not be able to progress and achieve a better standard of living. Consequently, for some poorer households the potential future benefits of an educated daughter were worth the temporary economic strain of someone just sitting at home. Therefore, the opinions and considerations about gap years were shared across socio-economic divides and were based on the belief that hard work and personal self-development make one deserving.

The student's socio-economic backgrounds, however, made a difference in their lived experiences of the gap year, and these differences were very much gendered. For example, in Zahra's case, her father's and family's values were largely influenced by a combination of certain Indian/Asian cultural practices and Muslim beliefs, suggesting that a young woman like her should get married at a young age, if she was not studying. Therefore, during her gap year she faced the choice to either start studying the following year or to get married and become a house-wife. Rejecting marriage, as she had thought of herself too young to get married at the time, she decided to study at UJ instead. Many Black African and Coloured young women were warned by their families, friends and social circles against early pregnancies that can happen during the gap year. It is a widespread stereotype that sitting around 'doing nothing,' meaning not doing anything productive such as studying or working, makes young women and girls vulnerable to getting pregnant. This in turn is presumed to have negative consequences on their lives. Sat-Ra Nthabi, who was a mother of three, went through such an experience and formed a critical view of taking a gap year:

I always discourage people with taking a gap year after matric. Don't take a gap year. Go straight to varsity, coz if you take a gap year, [laugh] then you're gonna look at your boyfriend and anything is possible. And I think that's kinda what happened to me. [laugh]. Yah, it was kinda like your stupid... not a choice, because I

didn't make that choice, but it was kinda like being irresponsible and not thinking.

During the interview, Sat-Ra Nthabi went on to describe her father's reaction when she had gotten pregnant, or as she put it, when she was making her mistakes. With fondness in her voice, she described how highly she thought of her father, who was a pastor, because he did not judge her or otherwise ostracise her. She contrasted his attitude from other people in the township, who automatically disregard a young pregnant girl's life chances.

The fear of social judgement is a powerful way of disciplining young women and extending control over their bodies. It is not surprising, that several students proudly highlighted that their parents or their church communities promoted being non-judgemental as an ideal and a virtue. These students said that they were brought up in value systems that did not denounce other Christian denominations or Black Africans who followed traditional beliefs and practices. Others claimed that they did not judge those who displayed their wealth through conspicuous consumption, or women and girls who got pregnant at a young age. While these non-judgemental views were expressed by some students, they portrayed themselves as exceptions to the majority of South Africans, whom they considered to be very judgemental, or in other words, who disciplined young women against the standards of sexual abstinence and moral piety.

The norms related to sexuality and being deserving of social benefits or support were clearly shown in the students' descriptions of what it meant to be a 'good girl,' when they were growing up. The ideal girlhood or young womanhood to which most of them felt held, was articulated in opposition to someone who went out late, drank and partied. Such women and girls did not meet the standard of hard work, because they did not stay home to do their chores and to study. The students' articulation of being a good girl resonates with the idea of respectability, which has been identified in contemporary South Africa for example by Bhana and Anderson (2013) amongst young Coloured women in KZN, and which has been shown by Bridger (2018) and Healy-Clancy (2014) to be an important element of dominant femininities amongst Black Africans during

the apartheid era. Clark (2018) and others (see for example Isoke [2016]) highlights how many contemporary African feminists on the continent and in the diaspora, including many South African hip-hop artists, challenge respectability, which arose from racialised stereotypes of insatiable hypersexualised African women. As a result of such norms, many of the students felt that the young women who partied and hence did not work hard, did not deserve access to free HE or at least were not as deserving of it as those who did.

Students believed that sexuality was similarly used to judge women in politics. Although some students thought that several of them got their positions undeservingly because of their marital or familial relations, they did not believe that most women slept their way to the top. The students said that this stereotype was often used to discredit women either by other women competing for the same positions or by men. While most students harshly rejected this attack on powerful and successful women, they were more likely to negatively judge their peers and consider them underserving if they demonstrated behaviour that countered the 'good girl/woman' norms. In other words, they applied different levels of judgement to their age peers.⁴¹

It must be *deliberately* stated that the neoliberal values of self-improvement and Puritan, hard work logic (Giddens, 2001), which underpin the students' views about who is deserving, intersect with gender, age and race and thus exercise their normative power. With regards to race, in addition to the aforementioned example of land ownership or academic institutional standards (discussed in various chapters), internalisation of whiteness as a benchmark of excellence is also manifested in some students' critique of affirmative action policies and the presumed sense of entitlement that they perceived amongst some Black African people. Phillipine, for example, compared the attitude and actions of Black African people like her parents to whites. When we were discussing access to

⁴¹ Many students clearly engaged in behaviour that went against this articulation of femininity, while only a few talked about it openly and embraced it as a sign of their disregard of the prevalent norms. However, whether the students adhered to or rejected the norms does not bear influence on the fact that they recognised it as an ideal norm, which shaped their evaluations of other women and the expectations that they held of FPEs as ideal versions of themselves.

education and whether white students had an advantage, she proposed that white students indeed had it easier, because their parents could pay for their studies and so they did not have to rely on NSFAS. However, her rationale was not based on systematic or structural racism, but on her own parents' insufficient efforts and actions. She believed that Black African parents should have tried harder over the last 20 years to get degrees and get on the same level as white parents, because there was nothing in their way to stop them getting ahead in life and to provide more for their children. Phillipine's views assigned high value to working white parents, who served as a benchmark against which all other groups in South Africa were assessed.

Affirmative action policies, such as entry quotas into universities, are also closely tied to the debate about who deserves access to HE. Some students across different backgrounds felt that these policies gave unfair advantage to Black Africans in an era, when race should no longer matter. These students believed that skills and education should be the determinant factors of success and achievement. One such student was Thobile. She was an African student from Mpumalanga, but she lived not too far from the university in a student commune. She was able to finance her first year of studies through instalments with the assistance of her father who encouraged her to get educated and go to university, when she had been hesitant during her high school years. For her second year, she was waiting for NSFAS funding to come through when we met, as late as in March 2017, nearly month and a half into the first semester.⁴² During her time at UJ, she was pursuing a degree that was connected to politics, and after struggling to adjust to the workload in the first year, she was coping well, although she did not manage to engage with organisations or societies. She conveyed the sentiment of several of her peers:

In this century that 'thing' of white people ... [that] they're more privileged than Black people, it's getting, ... I don't wanna say

⁴² Allocation and distribution of funds through NSFAS was one of the key challenges facing students and a point of critique raised by Fallists and scholars. Attributed mainly to administrative deficiencies and corruption within NSFAS, students experienced anxieties about their financial status and ability to study, as well as real everyday struggles to purchase books and keep up with course work or to pay for housing and food.

overrated, but I feel like it's time for us to just move on in terms of who's more privileged because of their skin colour and stuff like that. Can't we really recognise, if there is hard work or something?

Thobile's views show a sense of frustration with the pervasiveness of racial and class discourses in South Africa. Rather than denying that these differences mattered and continued to be relevant, it was more of an expression of a desire for meritocracy and achievement, which she viewed as a just and fair measure of deserving benefits, opportunities and ultimately success and wellbeing. Many Black African students saw affirmative action as a tool to off-set existing power inequalities and privilege rather than a promotion of unfair counter-privilege. Hence, quotas were seen both as a tool undermining and strengthening one's deservedness.

Many non-Black African students argued that they also wanted equality for all; however, they believed that affirmative action and quotas were the wrong way to achieve it. They perceived these policies as bringing them (non-Black Africans) down, rather than lifting others up. For example, Daniela was a white student in her second year of Biokinetics studies at the DFC campus. She lived with her parents and commuted to school by car, although she preferred to park at APK and take the university-funded bus to DFC as a safety precaution. As many other students, she was worried about driving in the CBD. Her mother paid her fees in her first year, and she was able to get a bursary for her second year, but she was also working while not being a member of clubs or societies. She had originally applied to Wits to study medicine, but she was told that she did not get into the country's leading programme because of racial quotas. Many white students such as Daniela failed to recognise the structural nature of racial privilege because in their daily lives, they did not feel that whiteness gave them undeserved benefits. This meant that they believed instead that the same way their parents worked hard to earn their living and their status, they too were working hard on their education and thus deserved the corresponding benefits and positive outcomes. Therefore, many non-Black African students used the same ideals about how one becomes deserving as their Black African counterparts. They sought the same idea of justice and equality, while arguing for the opposing political objectives.

As I have shown so far, the students applied the expectations of being deserving through hard work to other students and themselves; yet, there is a strong generational element to the discourses connected to the idea of hardship and struggle, which I discuss in the next section, which makes the older generations deserving of power and privilege, while portraying the youth as underserving in the absence of struggle. Consequently, the discourses are further used to discipline the youth and they contribute to preserving the differences between elites in positions of power, who are supposed to be revered as role models, and young people in university.

Struggle and Hard Work: The Undeserving BF Generation

The narratives of struggle are a key feature of the South African political and social landscape. The two most widespread and inter-related versions of struggle in the context of my research were associated with the fight against apartheid and the experiences of marginalised Black Africans. The former struggle encompasses experiences of anti-apartheid activism, ranging from political campaigns and organising in exile, through advocacy and imprisonment in South Africa, to widespread acts of everyday resistance, which were met with the brutal force of the regime. The second iteration of struggle refers to the lives of the impoverished, of the un- or under-employed and of the precariat in South Africa. The symbolic personification of this struggle, which is an extension of the anti-apartheid one, is a Black African woman in a rural village or a township, who continues to find it difficult to put food on the table, secure housing, water, electricity and sanitation for her family, despite the ANC promises to deliver a better life for all. For some people, this idea of struggle, sometimes subsumed or replaced by the notion of Black pain, may be seen as an expression of victimhood. However, such an approach robs those who struggle of their political and personal agency and for the students in my research, women's struggles were actually an expression of agency because they were a site of strength, grit and perseverance. Journalist Thandeka Gqubule captures the sentiments about struggle well in her writing about Thuli Madonsela's experiences fighting for the Public Protector's report on Nkandla to be accepted and implemented. Gqubule

writes, “Africans, and others, have fallen in love with the strength of those who bear difficult loads with grace and dignity” (2017, 117). Thus, referring to struggle becomes a tool of self-empowerment and an avenue to demand redress for those, who by the virtue of their marginalisation have been deprived of a voice and who are considered to deserve justice and admiration.⁴³

The students’ view that one becomes deserving through hard work and perseverance in hardship and struggle, was shown in many students’ appreciation of their mothers⁴⁴, who were some of their most frequently cited role models. The students had access to the life-journey narratives of their mothers, and thus were able to appreciate their various struggles and/or hard work. For example, some mothers were portrayed as working hard in their jobs, taking care of the family, volunteering and giving back to the community, while others were struggling to make ends meet as single unemployed carers with no or little income, who managed to provide for their families against the odds. One of these students was Sharon. Living with her mother in a township in Gauteng, it seemed to me that she was downplaying what I perceived as serious problems, such as debt-collectors knocking on their door, asking for money to settle her outstanding bill for a semester that she took at UNISA. That semester was her first attempt to start university studies, which, however, fell through because the money she had been promised by allegedly politically connected individuals did not materialise. She saw her mother as a superwoman – with no education or jobs, her mother pulled Sharon and her brother through, after her father passed away when she was seven. These findings echo Michelle McLean’s (2004) research on role models amongst medical students at Nelson Mandela School of Medicine in Durban. She found that majority of the role models were from students’ family circles, and had qualities such as being “successful, intelligent,

⁴³ It is not the intention here to perpetuate a narrative that all Black African women are automatically supposed to be powerful and hard-working leaders and thus assign to them the responsibility to build and maintain their families and communities, as many NGOs working on the continent tend to assume through their economic empowerment programming. However, it is meant to show that many women *do* undertake such responsibilities.

⁴⁴ The students also mentioned their fathers, parents collectively, and other primary caretakers and familial individuals such as cousins, aunts and grandmothers that were present in their life. Hence, the stories mentioned here about the students’ mothers represent a broader group of caretakers.

moral and someone who *tackles the hardships that they face and comes through victorious*” and because mothers were seen as “*hard-working*, for persevering through crises or disadvantage or for providing for and educating a family (often single-handedly) under difficult circumstances” [my emphases] (2004, 137).

Although the post-1994 struggle discourses are inherently tied to the pre-1994 hardships of many Black Africans and women in particular, there is an important distinction caused by the 94 political transition. While the anti-apartheid struggle was seen as much of a political and ideological fight as well as economic and social, the democratic era saw the de-politicisation of Black African women’s struggle, together with the struggles of other disadvantaged groups (Gibson, 2016; Bond, 2014; Staeheli and Hammett, 2013; Gouws, 2005a; Manicom, 2005;). After 1994 the ANC propagated a very particular ideal of a responsible citizen, who patiently works under the leadership of the ANC to deliver economic development. In such narratives, “poor black people’s freedom and equality is always to be attained in the future” (Selmeczi, 2015, 68). Selmeczi’s assessment hints at how patience and perseverance are the basis of the political order, built on the idea that a better life is in the making and will be achieved once the democratic revolution is complete. This approach is a mixture of communist-inspired rhetoric and Christian ideas of suffering in mortal life, which complements the neoliberal, puritan work-ethics described earlier. Suffering, sacrifice, and struggle as a life experience thus become tolerated. They become a redeeming quality, and thus this discourse sustains the systems of power, in which the majority continues to experience poverty and marginalisation. Moreover, those who experience struggle can claim moral superiority, which is complemented by devaluation of those who have it easy in life. Hence, struggle narratives create an identity-based difference between the students as the generation free of apartheid racism, and their predecessors. Thus, the struggle narratives, both past and present, seek to stabilise the systems of power inequality, in which the younger, BF generation is disempowered.

When I spoke with Miriam, an anti-apartheid activist, she portrayed herself as someone committed to building new South Africa and developing the youth. Speaking about generational differences and the post-1994 changes, she said:

I don't know if there is understanding [between generations]. I think, sometimes because we don't understand their struggle, we feel that they have an entitlement attitude. I feel that even about my children [laugh]. I feel that I struggled to be where I am, and I find that they make sometimes, what I think, is unreasonable demands. But from their perspective, they're not unreasonable. But I understand though, because I had the same at that age too with my parents – there was this inter-generational misunderstanding. For example, when we would stay and not go to school and would demand that they don't go to work. They would not understand why we would make even those demands.

Miriam was clearly self-critical and tried to be self-reflective in her assessment of generational differences, but her immediate reaction demonstrates the societal anxieties and tensions around the youth as undeserving of the benefits that were ushered in the post-apartheid era. She perceived herself, and arguably other members of her generation, to have deserved and achieved the life they had, because they gave up their youth to apartheid struggle and because they worked hard for what they had. Consequently, the BF generation becomes pre-disposed to be judged critically as underserving, because they have not experienced the apartheid struggle or in the case of particular economic classes, other types of hardship.

Beresford (2015) finds parallel generational tensions in his research amongst leading ANC members. Feeling a sense of nostalgia, many ANC struggle veterans believe that new ANC members, who joined the party after the end of apartheid, did not do so from ideological reasons or for the cause, but they did so based on their desire to make careers and drive luxury cars and thus to profit from the ANC patronage network. Deborah Posel (2010) similarly captures this tension within the ANC, albeit not in generational terms. In her analysis of race and consumption, Posel suggests that understanding one's freedom as consumption might be a logical outcome of the long history of the colonial and apartheid regimes, which controlled the consumption and access of Black populations as a

means of setting racial boundaries. As she notes, while some ANC liberation stalwarts find the idea offensive, the ability of Black Africans to consume might be seen as emancipative for others. However, in the ANC context, as within the wider society, those consuming do not possess the same moral high ground as the older generations. This distinction around being deserving based on struggle thus mirrors the distinctions about the ideas of eliteness and political leadership, which I discuss in Chapter Six.

The moral superiority of struggle has been a crucial building block of the ANC's policy of cadre deployment, as it justifies the provision of political rewards and other benefits to those who were part of the anti-apartheid movement. It is therefore not surprising that most students were convinced that many women in politics got into their positions because of their involvement in the struggle. One of these struggle figures is Lindiwe Sisulu, an experienced minister and a long-term career politician. Sisulu had also been known as the daughter of Albertina and Walter Sisulu, two of the anti-apartheid's well-known stalwarts. When Sisulu entered the ANC presidential race in mid-2017, she was heralded as the dark horse and the potential deputy-president candidate for Cyril Ramaphosa. However, during the campaign she was attacked for being 'royalty', due to her familial connections, which she countered with her own struggle credentials and political track record (Madia, 2017). As I have argued before, similar critiques were raised against Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and NDZ and it has been a widespread and well-documented practice in many post-colonial and post-revolutionary contexts, where politicians' wives, partners and female relatives have been used as pawns to extend the power of their male relations; alternatively, where women with their own credentials were being discredited in this way (Bauer, 2011; Bauer and Britton, 2006; Tripp, 2006; 2001). Based on this stereotypical sexist view of women's undeserved access to power, the emphasis was placed on targeting Sisulu's deserving her role through her own abilities and competencies.

My exchange with Lesego shows the importance of the distinction between deserved position and underserved privilege of women in politics rather clearly.

When I asked her, whether she would point out women in politics as role models to her daughter had she one, she responded:

Lesego: I think so, yes, because of the fact that they [women in politics] made it, into the positions they are occupying. It means that they are capable of something, like they worked hard, I believe so.

Ján: ... You just said that she [NDZ] would do the same as her husband.

Lesego: Yah, so, no I wouldn't vote for her as president.

Ján: But you would still show her as an example to your daughter?

Lesego: No, OK, let me specify. ... I would make my daughter look up to those, like different departmental ministers and the chairperson, but not Zuma.

Lesego's statements highlight the importance of being deserving of one's success through one's own hard work, as was the case of female departmental ministers, who she believed were capable and thus having shown that they deserved their positions. The students' sentiments, as demonstrated in Lesego's exchange with me, also underline that the struggle experience and credentials were not enough to make elites to be seen as being deserving of their political power. The credentials must be accompanied by hard work. While the students did recognise the importance of the struggle, they acknowledged the atrocities of the previous era and at least intellectually and emotionally they appreciated the sacrifices made, they expected more. Correspondingly, the students who participated in my study and who said that they vote for the ANC, did so because they believed the ANC deserved their support based on their post-1994 achievements, such as the provision of housing, social grants and other pro-poor measures. These findings align with what other researchers, for example Gordon, Struwig and Roberts (2017) and Anyangwe (2012), have suggested about the diminishing youth support of the ANC, based on ANC's inability to deliver services and other tangible outcomes in citizens' daily lives. Moreover, these students' support for the ANC was also amplified by the argument that other parties have not demonstrated that they deserve their vote instead. For example, the lack of governance track record of the EFF at the time of our interviews, or to some Black Africans the questionable track record of the DA in the Western Cape, meant that the students were unconvinced about the opposition deserving their

switch of allegiance from the ANC. Hence, the perceptions of one being deserving through hard work also facilitated the students' political views both in support and against the ANC.

The centrality of hard work and struggle in the students' understanding of who is deserving, fostered a belief and hope that if the students worked hard in varsity, they deserved to get good grades, their degrees and/or jobs in the future. Put differently, they felt that because they were people who met the criteria of being deserving, they should be positively rewarded for their hard work, without necessarily questioning whether this hard work was also of appropriate quality. Being a hard worker can therefore be understood as an important ideal characteristic for the students, which is then projected in their FPE construction, especially as many women in politics were not seen to be deserving on all fronts. It shows that students may become empowered by their constructed ideal of the FPE and use the norms and discourses that try to discipline them to subvert the elites in power. Concurrently, it also means that many students were critical and dismissive of their Black African peers, who as a post-apartheid generation, can already have undeserved privilege passed onto them from their middle class/elite parents. This would be in particular with regards to jobs and employment. At the same time, many non-Black African students felt that because of the political power being with the Black African majority, the system was skewed against them and was not rewarding them for their hard work as they deserved.

The expectation for ideal FPEs to work hard in order to be seen as deserving of their powerful positions, affects whether students believe young women and men deserve to be labelled as 'political elites'. While most students used examples of women from older generations, when talking about FPEs, the students had mixed reactions to my proposition that student leaders or the key figures of the FMF could be considered FPEs. Some rejected the notion because of what they perceived as the Fallists' lack of achievement – these students believed that Fallists have not yet demonstrated that they have achieved enough with their activism to deserve the designation. Consequently, they would be

considered as FPEs 'in the making' – with their education, passion and commitment for the cause, an FMF leader could become an FPE after she will have achieved her political objectives. Others believed that FMF leaders have already accomplished some of their goals, as seen with the president's no-fee increase policy in 2015. For both of these groups of students, an FPE would not necessarily be an older person, but someone who has demonstrated that they can be successful agents of change, which however, tended to be older people. Students who saw eliteness as a positive and desirable label would therefore argue that it was a status they were striving towards, rather than something that they have already achieved. Exceptionalism of FPEs was thus in a way future-orientated. This underscores the construction of FPEs as ideal versions of the students themselves.

The necessity to be hard-working and struggling as an FPE meant that women in politics were expected to continue manifesting their deservedness in their positions of power. As Sinqobile put it during her group discussion:

At first, these women, they made it to the political elitism stage, but you still need to continue... Baleka Mbete, she is in the comfort zone now, she is no longer breaking the norm, unlike Tuli Madonsela. She [Madonsela] is still breaking boundaries, she is there, she is still moving forward. So, I think it's about continuing breaking the norm, challenging the system.

Sinqobile's critique of Baleka Mbete, shared by the students across socio-economic and racial backgrounds, shows that women in positions of power are expected to continue to work hard, which is important especially vis-à-vis the distrust that many students have of the political establishment. Students often recalled watching Parliament on TV and seeing male and female MPs sleeping in the chambers. Symbols of laziness and inactivity, the images of sleeping MPs reinforce the students' views that political elites are old, tired and out of touch with reality and hence inadequate. Similarly to the aforementioned issue of ANC WL's patriarchal bargain, some students gave these women in politics the benefit of the doubt that in their youth they had been trailblazers, because of their

apartheid struggle and/or because of their achievement of high positions against a patriarchal push-back.

The students' critique of inactivity and laziness can also help explain why the passion and engagement of the EFF and some members of other opposition parties were appealing to many young people. Many commentators attribute the attractiveness of the EFF to the radicalism of its ideas and the Black nationalist populism, while some even undervalue the EFF appeal by linking it to the naiveté, idealism and inexperience of youth. However, as I have shown, many of my interviewees expressed an appreciation for cooperative, collaborative and solution-orientated politics, which suggests that the appeal of the EFF is rooted more in their shift away from the perceived ANC inactivity, stagnation and a sense of being stuck. As the students perceive themselves as change-makers and as they desire change, the perception of activity, whether it leads to results or not, is very appealing. Hence, even without witnessing many women in politics as hard working, struggling and thus deserving of their power, privilege and other rewards, the students still constructed the ideal of deserving, hard-working FPE, based on other spheres of life and other aspects of the political landscape in the country. It was these ideal norms that challenge those anti-heroes in power and provide normative resources to challenge the existing elites.

The Implications of Being a Deserving Hard Worker: Entrepreneurs as Role Models

The importance of hard work and its neoliberal underpinning in students' normative expectations is shown in the widespread validation and praise of entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs are usually portrayed as people who do not depend on others to make their success happen or who would wait for others to give them employment opportunities. One such young female entrepreneur was a participant in the aforementioned research by UJ Centre for Social Development in Africa, who spoke at their report launch event in 2016. She was a young woman projecting an image of a hip urbanite, who took advantage of a skills-development course offered by an employability-focused NGO. Afterwards, she decided to start her own business. She was driven, optimistic and with the

right attitude, because she was not waiting for others to help her, but actively sought mentors and business partners for her own initiative. Entrepreneurs like this young woman are the only ones, according to most of my participants, who have the chance of becoming successful in South Africa even without HE – who can ‘make it’ up the ladder without degrees. In the midst of high youth unemployment, emphasising entrepreneurship becomes the government’s preferred solution because it absolves it of the need to deliver structural reform and create opportunities. Moreover, entrepreneurship reinforces and is reinforced by the broader narratives of the responsible citizen, who does not wait for handouts and social grants, who pays taxes, does not protest, waits patiently, and votes for the ANC.

Despite the overwhelming praise of entrepreneurship, as Akinkugbe and Wohlmuth (2016) point out, many entrepreneurs fail despite their potential. This is partially caused by the insufficient appreciation of the precarious, unstable nature of the middle class positionality, as BMC are most frequently targeted as potential entrepreneurs. Due to their circumstances, aspiring entrepreneurs in the BMC often lack saving skills and other abilities to succeed in an economy that is dominated by big corporations. This neglect to recognise the high numbers of failed businesswomen and men is reinforced by the public praise of the successful self-made entrepreneurs such as Cyril Ramaphosa, or celebrities such as Trevor Noah, Bonang Matheba or Oprah Winfrey. The latter two women embody the ‘rags to riches’ pathways of social mobility for Black African women and were, therefore, understandably seen as life-journey role models for many young women in my research.

Bonang and Oprah are Black African businesswomen and media personalities, who were hailed for their perseverance and the ability to reach success, despite the odds that were stacked against them, namely their gender, race, poverty and their difficult family background growing up. The students who mentioned one of the two businesswomen would usually not pick both of them together as role models, and some would probably take offence at the idea that I group them together. The main tension between Oprah and Bonang seemed to stem from the

moral judgement and critique that some of the students expressed against Bonang. She was described by one student as “a television personality ... she’s made a name for herself, she’s hustling for herself, ... though there are some scandals about her [having an affair with a married man], but she really did it for herself.” Oprah on the other hand was known in South Africa for her charitable work with girl’s empowerment initiatives and running a girls’ school in Gauteng (eNCA, 2016b) in addition to her business and media success. Nonetheless, the appeal of both their respective journeys to fame and success underscores the importance of having knowledge of life histories, which I argue in Chapter Five is missing in the case of many women in politics.

It is not only the exceptional grand cases like Oprah Winfrey and Bonang, but the everyday ‘hustlers’ who also reinforce this neoliberal value system embedded in entrepreneurship. Capturing the essence of hustling, one student blogger described young people in Braamfontein, a hipster part of Johannesburg’s CBD as follows:

People have steady jobs but they always seem to be doing something on the side. A guy could own a coffee shop, but he’s a fashion designer on the side, or a girl could be a retail cashier, but she’s doing photography part-time. Young people here are such hustlers. It’s inspiring working in a place where young people are not just waiting for something to happen but they’re actively doing stuff (Rehman, 2016).

Hustlers, however, are not only hip individuals. They are also poor, informal jacks of all trades, who make ends meet by being creative and finding ways through life’s challenges and struggles. Many students wanted to run their businesses on top of having full time jobs, and even if they did not see their future through the prism of hustling, many admired those who were hustlers. For example, Laury admired how her mother was a hustler. Laury was an African student whose well-educated father lived and worked in another country, because he was unable to get employed in South Africa as a non-citizen. She could see herself in Parliament and although she was not a member of a party, she engaged in campus societies. Laury struggled with university fees as a result of her family’s situation, and nearly did not return to UJ for her second year in

2017. Nonetheless, she admired her mother because she was hustling to provide for the family. Without a matric and in charge of three children, she had to get additional income for the household to ensure they get by and cooked traditional foods that she sold and had an informal tailoring business as well. Praise-worthy hustlers therefore reinforce the students' ideals of being deserving through hard work and through overcoming obstacles on their own or with limited support from the government. Together with the examples of successful businesswomen who also serve some role model function, the female entrepreneurs underscore that women in politics as potential life-journey role models and as symbols of special achievement or exceptionalism do not serve a unique function. They co-contribute to the articulation of the student's ideal self in the notion of a female political elite.

In the following, last section of the chapter, the projection of the students' lived reality and social context onto the FPE ideal is further seen in the role of education as an ideal trait connected to the notion of being deserving. Education plays a key role in the students' self-identification, including as a means to demonstrate their hard work. In other words, getting educated was not only an end status for them – a goal towards employment and economic wellbeing or a trait to be achieved – but it was also a process, through which they demonstrated being individuals deserving of wellbeing, success and support. Recalling the graduation season at UJ in early 2017, one of the key characteristics of this time of academic year is displaying student success stories on the university website. Many of the stories presented were of Black African female students, who managed to successfully complete their studies despite their unfavourable circumstances (University of Johannesburg, 2017b). These life stories offered motivation to their target readership, be it a prospective high school student who was unsure whether UJ was the place for her, or a current student, who was riddled with doubt about whether she could make it all the way to her degree. They were presumably selected because they were just like many other young women and men at UJ, and hence because of their similarity, they were potential role models. Their feature stories showed the high value and recognition that

students, the university and the society at large, placed on working hard and struggling towards achieving university degrees.

Educated, Competent and Aware

While the students in my research expected both men and women to be educated, it was especially important for FPEs, as many students believed women had to prove themselves and work twice as hard as their male counterparts in order to achieve the elite status and power that came with it. While most students saw being educated through the prism of formal schooling and holding degrees, a few students thought about it in more encompassing terminology of being aware, smart, competent or skilled. The latter group of my participants tended to recall examples of individuals, such as their mothers, parents or other relatives, whom they considered to be smart, intelligent or skilled, even if they lacked papers to prove it. The underlying rationale for these qualities was the desire for political elites to offer solutions that will help change the country and the uneducated, yet competent and skilled individuals served as proof that change can be done. Street smarts or the ability to solve practical problems of the day-to-day life was also seen by a handful of students as a predominantly female type of knowledge that many men did not possess. This appreciation for practicality also substantiates the students' understanding of ideal eliteness as rooted in the everyday life. Concurrently, it shows that elite status should be achieved from the bottom up, and it should not only be available to the already powerful or privileged. It follows then that it offers a way to challenge those in power and hence that it has empowering potential.

An example of an educated, competent politician that met the FPE expectation in this regard was Naledi Pandor, who was mentioned by Laury and only a few additional students, which can be partially explained by the limited media and public attention that she received at the time. Naledi Pandor was then the Minister of Science and Technology and had served in a number of cabinet positions in previous administrations. She was praised by the media as well as the opposition (Democratic Alliance, 2016) as one of the best performing Cabinet members. In the Mail and Guardian newspaper's (2018b; 2018a) annual

government members' scorecards for both 2016 and 2017, she was described as a hard-working minister, who ran a tight ship, did well with financial audits, represented the country well, and tirelessly advocated for resources for her portfolio. However, most of the students spoke about her as educated, well-spoken and articulate. Laury said:

I don't like those female MPs, Bathabile [Dlamini], they can't communicate properly. It really makes me angry. Coz I know so many Black females that could go up there and kill it right now. So, it's just a misrepresentation of what we are. If you're going to be in parliament, you must be smart. Be like Naledi Pandor. Very graceful... I've [got] ton of respect for her because she is smart. She is soft spoken, but when she speaks, she says stuff, then you'd be like, oh, this lady, she's A-list.

Thuli Madonsela and Lindiwe Mazibuko also represented what many students expected of FPEs – women who were competent and educated, which was shown in the way that they came across in public engagements. Madonsela had frequently been described by commentators as soft-spoken, yet direct. It was her ability to provide facts and 'knowing her stuff' amongst other characteristics, that attracted students to her. Mazibuko was also complimented for having well-reasoned arguments and evidence when speaking in Parliament. Moreover, she was applauded for continuing her studies at Harvard after having finished her parliamentary role for the DA. The ability to communicate was therefore an important characteristic of a political leader and much of the current scholarship on protest in South Africa (Gouws 2018; Kihato, 2014; Paller, 2013; Bénit-Gbaffou, 2008) substantiates this finding, as it shows people's disenchantment with the lack of communication and openness from political elites.

As the students believed that women needed to grow into eliteness, the criticism and public backlash against women in politics based on their competency, skills and mistakes, deterred many of my participants from wanting to try to become an FPE and enter formal politics. The ANC WL frequently had to defend its members and other ANC women in the cabinet against the critique that showed them as incompetent. These women included for example Nomvula Mokonyane, then Minister of Water and Sanitation, the chairwoman of the South African

Airlines at the time, Dudu Myeni and former Police Commissioner, Riah Phiyega (Matuba, 2017a; 2017d; 2016a). The ANC WL explained these 'attacks' as smear campaigns and blamed patriarchy, white capitalists, anti-revolutionaries and other generic 'enemies' of the Black African women, who, they suggested, wanted to suppress their empowerment. Phiyega for example, was the only high-ranking official, who faced professional and political consequences for the Marikana tragedy. During the 2016-2017 period, an inquiry led by Judge Claassen released the report into Phiyega's fitness to hold office, after she was suspended in 2015 based on the inquiry into Marikana events (so-called Farlam Commission). It was argued by some critics of the government action in response to Marikana that as a woman, she was the easiest scapegoat which allowed the government to show that it had taken some action and held decision-makers accountable, while many others who were involved, such as Cyril Ramaphosa, were found innocent in the eyes of the justice system.

The pressure on women not to make any mistakes was the reason why Aria said she would not go into politics. During an FGD, she expressed her concerns over the demands that came with having positions of power:

I prefer to be in the back, because being in the front, there is a lot of pressure on you. At the back, I can slip up ... in the back I can work and juggle and do everything properly and then have people take recognition... With politics, I prefer to be in the back, but if it was something else, probably business or something, I'd want to be in the front, because I know these are my ideas, and even if I feel oppressed, I can actually fall down and say, no, I accept, I made a mistake, and I can work through, but if you have a whole country in your hand, that's another story.

Similarly concerned were several students who felt that they were not sufficiently aware of issues in the country or that they were not educated or skilled enough to go into politics and/or to even discuss it. They had high expectations of the knowledge and abilities that one should have to be political and to be an FPE in particular. As FPEs serve as ideal versions of the student herself, expecting exceptional intellectual capacities of political elites - leaders is partially a reflection of the desire of many students to have multiple degrees.

While to an extent this quest for degrees is a result of not being clearly committed to a career or being worried about job prospects, as I suggest in Chapter Five, the students also wanted to have more formal education, in order to become exceedingly skilled and to have in-depth knowledge, which would make them exceptional in what they do.

For many students, President Jacob Zuma stood in direct contrast to the ideal of a political elite for a variety of reasons, including his lack of education. He was frequently critiqued as unsuitable to lead the country or to be a role model for people, because he did not 'even' complete high school. His lack of exceptionalism, being an ordinary man, was very appealing to many of his supporters at the time of his election. Chris Jones (2017), a scholar of moral leadership, argues that Zuma and many other leaders did not have knowledge and comprehension, which he links to the fact that education was not currently valued in South Africa. However, for the students in my research, the contrary was true. While there was a recognition that formal education was not the be all and end all, and that in order to be a leader or to be successful there were other avenues or forms of education that may be just as important, with regards to political elites-leaders, and FPEs in particular, awareness, competency and formal education were the expected qualities and characteristics.

The concern about the devaluation of knowledge and education in South Africa is directly linked to the aforementioned discourses that render young people more concerned with consumerism and materialism than socio-political issues. With many UJ students telling me that politics was not interesting for them or that they did not think politics was an area of relevance to their lives, it would seem that the pessimistic conclusions of some commentators are warranted. However, it is important to acknowledge that while many students found themselves unable or unwilling to discuss politics, they had a certain level of admiration for those who could. Hence, the problem that requires a political and social response is in the limited understanding of who is able to talk about politics or under which circumstances one has the authority to make contributions about politics.

A recent graduate from Wits, whom I met in her capacity as a writer and journalist for a youth culture and media consultancy, pointed out this difference. When we discussed what were some of the issues and debates that she found to be resonating with young Black African people that she wrote for, she listed issues such as hair and body image, or control over women's bodies, as well as spirituality and being informed about latest socio-political issues. She said:

I think being woke is somewhat of a trend now. If you're going to talk about what was in the news yesterday then, you know what is happening, you can tell us about the current situation... so being informed is cool... like knowing things, just being informed is really cool. If you can stand up and speak about something, if you know everything, then people are like, wow, this person is pretty cool.

The writer's comments resonate with the aforementioned elite studies scholarship, which finds that being educated serves as a class distinction and which delivers prestige and thus creates a desirable identity marker. However, in the South African context being educated as an identity/identification marker has a generational racialised dimension, and it is used as a tool of youth elite-leader wannabes to challenge the older elite in power. This distinction is rooted in the aforementioned limited opportunities afforded to Black populations during apartheid.

In addition to the already discussed case of Zille-Mazibuko leadership challenge, an interesting example of this discourse came from Juliet, who was an African student from rural parts of Mpumalanga. She lived with her sister and her grandmother, whom she spoke very fondly of, and whom she said she missed very much while at university. She lived in a small village, with no shops or other services. She believed that more Black Africans were becoming educated, which meant that apartheid could not possibly be repeated. She expressed this view as we discussed voting for the DA, which is often discouraged amongst Black South Africans under the threat that the party would bring back apartheid. However, Juliet and others believed that it was not possible, because many more Black Africans were aware and empowered unlike in the past and would not allow apartheid to happen. Education thus arises as an exceptional identity marker and

a sign of distinction of the new Black generation, who considered older generations, and women with education such as the aforementioned Pandor, Madonsela or NDZ, as exceptions amongst women in politics. Consequently, this shows that students project their own ideals onto FPEs and hence construct an empowering ideal for themselves based on the role models and anti-heroes they observe.

Conclusion

The first set of norms expected of FPEs grouped around the discourses of being deserving, which I have discussed in this chapter, demonstrates the construction process of an FPE as an ideal version of the student herself based on role models and anti-heroes they perceive. As students pursue their HE, they are exposed to a multiplicity of discourses, which suggest to them that they must work hard on their education and not be lazy in order to be deserving of employment and other rewards and benefits of social mobility, as uncertain as they may be. These discourses adjudicating who is deserving and how deservedness is demonstrated are rooted in the students' everyday experiences with issues such as social welfare, land ownership, affirmative action and free HE policies, which all revolve around the praise for those who work hard and who demonstrate the neoliberal values of pulling oneself by their bootstraps. These debates are situated within the wider culture that praises struggle, especially the historical fight against apartheid, which leads to generational tensions as it puts youth as Born-Frees at a moral disadvantage against those in power with struggle credentials.

Values and characteristics of being hard working and educated that the students hold for themselves consequently form the normative expectations of ideal FPEs, who the students expect to have achieved and thus deserved their positions of power and influence. Although many women in politics are not believed to be meeting these values, characteristics, and behaviours, and hence could be understood as deterrent models, the students are able to construct the ideal of an FPE by comparing these women with other women and men in their lives, such as their mothers, or successful entrepreneurs and hustlers, which enables them

to envision a future for themselves in which patriarchal, racial, class and age-based power inequalities are subverted.

8 Exceptional People: Those Who Remember Where They Come from

Introduction

The second set of values, characteristics and behaviours that students associate with the ideal FPE is linked to the discourse of '*remembering where you come from*'. In this chapter I argue that the narratives of remembering operate on a sense of belonging and social ties. The threat of becoming detached from this community is then portrayed as a loss of identity and support mechanisms, which remain important due to the precarious situation of the South African nouveaux rich, the middle classes as well as the poor. Thus, the students are pushed to live within the established social order based on the intersecting norms of age, class, gender and race. By the disciplinary power of the discourse, the students' aspirations are moulded towards those forms of exceptionalism that are within the boundaries of the existing imagined community and do not challenge the powerful. Similarly to the discourse of being deserving, the remembering discourse is both accepted and subverted through various performative practices, be it of humility or speaking a specific language that are analysed here.⁴⁵

The students also express their remembering through caring for members of the community, be it their families or more expansively defined along a particular location, racial identification or otherwise. Consequently, the students expect political elites to show care for others, but they expect it more of female politicians than their male counterparts, because of the widely held assumption that women are naturally more caring than men. Care for others is infused, however, with seemingly contradictory ideas of independence and steadfastness,

⁴⁵ The analysis of practices of belonging and remembering in this chapter focus primarily on the Black African students, but the chapter should not be understood as an attempt at defining Blackness or whiteness. It is not the intention to provide an analysis of what Blackness means to young women, nor to suggest this is an exhaustive list of behaviours and characteristics that students understand as markers of Blackness. The chapter seeks to highlight instead how power is wielded by using and abusing the desire for community belonging, leading to the rejection of eliteness as exceptionalism amongst students across racial and class identifications. Moreover, it seeks to show how the attempts to discipline and police the students through the discourses are challenged, including through competing articulations of Black excellence, and women's Black excellence in particular.

resulting in the students' articulation of an FPE as a woman who does not give into gender oppression, greed and selfishness, but who is strong to withstand these normative pressures. Hence, FPEs represent a change from the male dominated status quo which echoes the ideal of change that students have of themselves. As a result, the discourses of remembering and being deserving, as well as their subversions, are morphed in the normative expectations of an FPE. These norms thus show the students' agency in creating the empowering effect of women in politics as role models.

Community and Belonging: Markers of Blackness and Whiteness

Remembering is an important notion through which anticolonial scholars conceptualise the impacts of colonisation on the colonised subject. Through the idea of remembering they articulate the processes through which the colonised people can deal with the internalised norms and ways of being of the coloniser. Franz Fanon (2008) in *Black Skins, White Masks*, for example, highlights the use of French as a way through which the colonised, in his case the people in the Antilles, attempted to be like the French. He writes, "Historically, it must be understood that the Negro wants to speak French because it is the key that can open doors which were still barred to him fifty year ago" (2008, 25). According to Fanon, the colonised reject their own language to become honorary French and to break away from Blackness, in order to become closer to being human. Fanon elaborates further, "In every country of the world there are climbers, 'the ones who forget who they are,' and, in contrast to them, 'the ones who remember where they came from'" (2008, 24). The consequence of these observations is, according to Fanon, the need for the colonised to remember who they are.

Just like Fanon, many young Black Africans I spoke to were both subconsciously and intentionally tackling the question of what Blackness meant to them and what it meant to decolonise and get rid of the internalised colonial worldviews. The students across various backgrounds were further grappling with the issue of how South African society should deal with the psychological impacts of the colonial and apartheid histories. In this context, Sara Ahmed's insights into the memory of pain and injury also bear relevance. She shows that remembering is

an important act because, “forgetting would be a repetition of the violence or injury. ... Our task might instead be to *remember how* the surfaces of bodies ... came to be wounded in the first place” [my emphasis] (2014, 33). *Remembering* in various contextual interpretations (see also wa Thiong’o [2017]) is therefore a powerful and widely spread discourse that penetrated the lives of my participants and shaped their perceptions of South African politics.

Probably the most illustrative example where *remembering* discourse can be understood is in spatial segregation. Relocation from racially defined areas established by the apartheid legislation, be it from a rural to an urban settlement or within various urban settings, visually represents the severance of ties with the ‘original’ Black community from which people came from and creates a potential identity difference and a social barrier. For example, after the end of apartheid, some Black households and individuals relocated into more affluent white neighbourhoods, which represented a change of the racial and class-based community. Others relocated within the racially-defined township spaces to higher quality sections, hence leaving their class-based community. For many of my respondents from township settings, specifying which part of the township they came from was important, because they represented a different type of everyday lived experiences, be it with regards to electricity access and sanitation, the type and size of house they lived in, the transport connection to the university campus or the amount of crime they were confronted with.

Spatial separation as a symbol of rupture of community relations mattered in the students’ decision-making about their university studies. Many Black African students chose to come to UJ because it was reasonably close to their families. Some expressed their parents’ or guardians’ desire for them not to go far away. Their rationale was partially based in direct economic considerations of costs of living away from home; however, an associated rationale was the parents’ belief that should something happen to the students, the proximity of family or extended networks meant the students could receive some assistance. Many students expressed their own desire to stay connected to their kin, rather than thinking it was something that was imposed upon them. Many non-Black African

students also said that they chose to come to UJ in order to live at home, cut costs and to enjoy the financial and other support of their families. While some saw this as their own choice within their financial circumstances, others clearly said they had no control over where they were going to live. Hence, although there was a clear and important difference in the degree to which these groups of students relied on the financial support of others and the degree of precarity of their lives, the rationales behind the students' choices of UJ were paralleled across various racial and socio-economic backgrounds.

An example of the importance that the remembering discourse carried amongst students was captured in my exchange with a student, who identified as Native African, and who knew that she was considered an elite by many of her peers. She came to study at UJ after having worked for a few years. Unlike many other students in my study and in the country more broadly, she had been able to get a relatively well-paid job with only a matric certificate, because she had studied abroad in high school and had been to various countries with her family. Her father was a medical doctor and her mother was a diplomat. The student lived on her own in a flat because her parents could afford to pay for it, and she drove to school in her own car. She went back and forth on deciding whether she embraced the label of elite or not, and expressed the pressures as follows:

Student: I think there is a sense of shame [for being called an elite] because it's like, oh, you have forgotten your roots. You've forgotten where you've come from. You've forgotten your people.

Ján: Why is that important?

Student: For me it is important not to forget where I come from and not to forget my people.

Ján: As in Black people?

Student: Yeah, because ... I am where I am at the backs of some people's struggle, right? I am where I am because some people had to give up their lives for me to be where I am. I wouldn't be having this conversation with you, if it wasn't for the people who came before me and fought for that. So, for me to just be like, whatever, I'm doing my thing, it's up to you, you do yours. It makes no sense, I have to pay it forward. They've taught me to pay it forward. So, I have to go back, get someone who is still behind and pull them up with me. That's how it is, that's how it ought to be.

The debates about remembering the Black community, its history and the role of older generations, as captured above, became central to HE experiences in 2016-2017 because of the Fallist call for decolonised, free, quality, HE. However, the debate reverberated with Black African youth also in high schools, many of which also failed to transform post-apartheid. Student protests at Pretoria Girls' High in particular caught the media spotlight in August 2016 after some of its pupils challenged the management over the school's hair and language policies, which forbade natural Black African hair styles and the use of vernacular. The image of Zulaikha Patel in her school uniform, a big afro and a raised fist standing in the face of a white school official, iconised the pupils' resistance (Nicolson, 2016; Wazar, 2016). These events, which left a considerable impression on many of my respondents, suggest on one hand the youth's efforts to claim and promote 'Black pride,' 'Black excellence' and to affirm 'Black culture' against the demeaning, dehumanising, oppressive treatment by white structures. Concurrently the events also spoke to the concern of the older generations that since 1994 insufficient effort has been made to stop Black African youth from losing their heritage, culture and traditions and thus forgetting where they come from.⁴⁶

For many students in my research, their relationship with culture and tradition was an ideological issue of political consequence, but more importantly, it was a matter of dealing with tensions and contestations over the everyday practices of modern urban lifestyle, consumption, technological use and holding so-called progressive values on race and gender. The students' engagement with the prevalent debates of culture and community, and consequently construction of their identity as young, Black Africans in South Africa, are occurring in a contentious cross-generational, cross-temporal context despite the falsely presumed dawn of a new era that came with the end of apartheid. Young people

⁴⁶ Many members of the Afrikaner community and some Afrikaner students in my research also felt that their identity and culture were under threat. Hence, in a perverse way, the Afrikaners shared the discourses that were prevalent amongst the Black African community, namely that the youth were at risk of losing their heritage and forgetting where they come from, such as the Boer history. The voice of the Coloured community, that also speaks Afrikaans as a mother tongue and sees it as part of its identity, was, however, neglected or ignored in the public discourse (van der Merwe, 2017; Wesi, 2015).

are operating within a context of competing sets of expectations and norms of what it means to belong to an imagined community or communities, some of which are passed on from previous generations, while others are articulated anew. The alleged shared experiences of racialisation and colonisation which mark an element of the community belonging, are interpreted and felt differently across and within generations and classes. For example, most students in my research simplistically synonymised the older generations with being resistant keepers of tradition and culture, especially Black African culture, as if it were set in stone. Some Fallists in contrast argued that the older generations have failed to decolonise and to subvert whiteness, which meant that they were not the supposed protectors of authentic African culture and hence not role models, but anti-heroes. Therefore, many young activists looked up to a select few individuals who were attempting to celebrate Blackness and Pan-Africanism – although these concepts were often undefined and contested, the same way as Eurocentrism or decolonisation.

In the eyes of many students, the struggle against racism of apartheid, colonisation and their continued legacies, is an inherent marker of Blackness. A Black student, who lived in Gauteng and commuted to campus and was a member of a day house as well as other organisations on campus, shared with me feeling blessed because unlike many other young people, she had both parents to rely on, who were married to each other and supported her, including through the varsity decision making process. She readily acknowledged her privilege and her statement that I cite below shows the norms and expectations that young Black Africans face with regards to Blackness, struggle and belonging:

I do feel judged [for not having to struggle]. The moment you haven't gone through a struggle, you haven't lived, for example, and you're whitewashed, or you're just basically being shunned upon.
...

I had a birthday party last year, and invited some of my friends, like, 'hey, come over, let's hang'... the moment after they see my house ... they'd be like, why do you have to worry, I mean, you're settled, *look at your house*, and stuff like that. And that actually

offends me, because, just because I'm privileged, doesn't mean that it's getting to my head and that I don't think about other people. ...

The close connection of wealth and whiteness, and struggle and Blackness, as described by the student, creates an inherent complexity of articulating what it means to 'remember where you come from' as a Black African and as an aspirational social climber.

The contestations about these questions show that the discourse of remembering has disciplinary power by setting identity-based norms and is wielded by people who want to maintain power as well as those who want to gain it. It allows for a certain level and type of social mobility and change, but only enough to make the suffering and struggle against apartheid worth the sacrifice and to believe in a better future. However, the change is not sufficient enough to displace elites and the powerful reaping the benefits of the status quo. While operating with some notion of change, the discursive power is embedded in a static view of culture and the desire to enforce an iteration of culture that is its 'true' and 'authentic' version, which gains in salience in a context of distrust and abuse of power as I argue in Chapter Three is the case in South Africa. Thus, the discourse creates a contested set of identities and lines of difference that all students have to navigate and which while disciplining them, also offers them the opportunity to challenge and resist the pressures to conform.

Black Culture and Traditional Leadership

Most of my research participants of all racial and socio-economic backgrounds argued that two key aspects that represented some generalised characteristics of Black African culture were age-based hierarchies and patriarchal discrimination of women. For example, Laury spoke to me at length about what she referred to as 'Black culture' and the way that it made her experiences different from those of white students. She highlighted that while white pupils spoke up and said to a teacher whatever they wanted, Black African kids believed that they had to be more reserved towards the teacher's authority. Thobile shared a similar sentiment with me when she recalled her first year at UJ and the adjustments she

had to go through. In addition to dealing with academic challenges, she had to adjust to a different classroom behaviour to what she had been used to in school. She said that out of respect for elders as authority, she would never have dared to eat snacks or talk in a classroom. At UJ, however, she said that students often did just that and they even left lectures early. She admitted that the idea of leaving class early made her uncomfortable because she thought it was disrespectful to the lecturer as an older person.

Despite the students' perceptions, age-based hierarchies are not limited to a particular culture or identity group in South Africa, although its power and prevalence varied for individual students. Whiteness also works with and through gerontocratic power system to control 'the Other' which is seen in infantilising and patronising (Gqola, 2015; Fanon, 2008). An example that resonated with me was the statement from a member of the Black Panthers, Ericka Huggins, who spoke at an event organised by UJ's Centre for Social Change in March 2017. She said, "My father died still being called a boy." Her statement, referring to the situation in the USA, demonstrates how age-based power works with gender, race and other forms of oppression. Her insights resonated strongly with the students in the audience, showing the transnational applicability. Similarly, seniority-based inequality is part of the Afrikaner traditional values. According to my participant Emily, respecting elders was one of the values that were impressed upon young people and hence, talking freely or talking back was not deemed acceptable. Emily was a first-year student at UJ when we met at the end of 2016 and she came from a mixed white background – her father was Afrikaner and her mother British – and so she said she was brought up in between two cultures. When university courses were in session, Emily lived with relatives not too far from the campus, as she was from another part of Gauteng and did not want to commute the distance. She was able to afford her fees because of her mother's job, that she described as well paid. She was contemplating her future at UJ in favour of another university and was thus not actively engaged member of on campus organisations. She said that both of her cultural backgrounds were conservative, but she believed that Afrikaners were perceived to be more conservative than British in South Africa, especially

because of the influence of the traditional Afrikaner NG Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church – NGK). Despite this clear gerontocratic similarity across cultural traditions, albeit in various degrees of importance, respect and submissiveness towards the elders was racialised as a predominantly Black African matter.

Most students also associated Black culture and tradition with gender norms, which expected women to be ‘submissive’ to men,⁴⁷ including in positions of decision-making, with the exception of basic household matters. Thus, the majority of the students believed that being modern was associated with holding views in support of gender equality, while traditional views and norms led to women’s oppression. These students’ views mirror Jewkes and Morrell’s (2012) distinction of modern and conservative femininities, with latter being seen as obedient, respectful and attached primarily to the older generations. Based on this dichotomy of culture and modernity of gender norms, unsurprisingly, none of the participants with the exception of one student mentioned so-called traditional leaders as examples of FPEs. Traditional leaders were constitutionally recognised and vested with political power as an act of ANC’s concession in exchange for political support in the South African democratic settlement and the subsequent elections. Thus, the considerable influence held by the traditional leaders was politically and legally substantiated. It is argued that they continue to exercise this influence, creating tensions between people’s everyday experiences on one hand and legal provisions and protections afforded to them on the other. For example, while gender equality provisions are constitutionally protected and stand above traditional practices, women’s opportunities and abilities to exercise their rights in matters such as land ownership or political representation within local structures continue to be undermined (Bauer, 2011; Beall, Mkhize and Vawda, 2005; Bentley, 2005; Walker, 1994).

⁴⁷ While many students spoke about women’s vulnerabilities and gender oppressions especially with reference to Black African culture, young women from all racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds experience patriarchal oppression. To varying degrees, the students expressed that their societal context – be it defined as broadly as South Africa, or as a particular community – was patriarchal, even if they claimed that their upbringing was different from the norm. For example, numerous Coloured students spoke about the society’s expectations that young Coloured women just fall pregnant and do not amount to anything, and Indian/Asian students mentioned the pressures to get some education, which should be followed by marriage rather than professional careers, meaning that their schooling did not need to be extensive or particularly exceptional.

Several Black African peoples in South Africa and the wider region have historically had female chiefs and queens, such as the mother of Shaka Zulu, queen Nandi (Sesanti, 2016; Shamase, 2014; Weir, 2007). However, only the Rain Queen, Majaji, and Queen Nzinga were mentioned by a few students in our interviews as FPE examples. For instance, Sat-Ra Nthabi mentioned Queen Nzinga to show that women used to hold important leadership roles in the past, and therefore, it was not un-African to see women in power, as some men tend to propose. However, it was only in her response to my prompting that she thought of Nzinga, rather than suggesting some of the female chiefs and other traditional leaders of the present day South Africa. The students' lack of association between FPEs and traditional leadership speaks to the prevalence of patriarchal nature of the current form of traditional politics, even if historically that had not been the case.

Tradition in the eyes of my interviewees was also located in the rural villages, and although several of my participants described their homes to be in these areas, they did not think that the traditional leaders mattered to their life. They did not consider them to be of sufficient importance to personally consult them in their decision-making, although they knew of other people who did. Danie was one of my research participants, whose story could be a poster representation of what the ANC envisioned for the Black African child in post-apartheid South Africa, because she was a Black young woman who came from rural Mpumalanga and received NSFAS funding to study at UJ, where she did not participate in any organisations or societies. When she was younger, she had to walk eight kilometres to school and after a whole day of classes she would have her household chores waiting for her at home. Despite what she called her conservative upbringing, she described herself as being different from the girls in her village and acting differently from the norm. She did not like to wear girly clothes and she played football with the boys. When I asked her whether traditional leaders played a role in her community and whether they could be seen as political elites she said:

Danie: Chiefs want to rule on their own. So, they are, obviously, against politics. ... they want to see themselves ruling elite, when you have to do certain tradition, certain ceremony, you go ask them, because they are the leaders. [You] get direction from them, what to do and what you're expected to do.

Ján: And are they all men or are there some women, or is it just men?

Danie: No, they're only mens. Strictly mens. No females would be given an opportunity to rule. Rule a man? No. Females are only submissive. They have to submit to men. ... I don't believe in that. Those [traditional leaders], actually, they want [to] control *everything*. Everything that we do, they wanna control it. Because they are males, and you know, they see themselves as powerful. ... We [women] just lead people as friends, nah, I don't believe that. I don't.

Danie's views were echoed by the majority of my research participants and demonstrate that students associate politics with modernity, progress and western values, which are in contrast to the notion of tradition and culture. This shows how students construct FPEs as symbols of the students' ideal selves as modern change makers and hence become empowered by the ideal role model that an FPE could be. Moreover, their rejection of the relevance of traditional authority also partially works as a challenge to the remembering discourse.

Considering the gendered nature of political eliteness, the generational divide over politics and patriarchy had many important consequences, some of which I have already alluded to in previous chapters. Firstly, it led to the belief that women in politics, as represented by the ANC WL, were passive and failed to actively participate, because as older women they were brought up in patriarchal culture. The frequent reference by my participants to ANC women as 'submissive grandmothers' and relegating their political relevance to leading processions during funerals and not much else, demonstrates this sentiment. Similarly, an exchange between two students during one of my FGDs shows the extent to which the Women's League was perceived as failing to fight for women's empowerment and 'progressive,' 'modern' gender norms:

Philile: There was a time, I don't know, a few years back, where a question was posed to the ANC Women's League... on whether they think that a female could lead the country and they said no. If women say 'no' to

such... older women, women who I feel I look up to, decide, 'no, I don't think we're ready for a female president', how am I as youth, young person supposed to look at such position...

Rose: ... The women in politics have grown up in our cultures ... it would make sense when they say, 'no we're not ready,' because their culture has indoctrinated them into thinking that... the man is in higher position, you are submissive because you're born a woman.

Philile: I get what you're saying, but I feel for their positions, they *owe* it to their position [to promote women for leadership roles].

In her commentary, Philile referred to the 2012 NEC elections. At the time, the WL did not put forward a female candidate for the party presidency, but supported the incumbent, President Jacob Zuma, which demonstrated the League's allegiance with the strongest and politically most beneficial party faction, instead of pursuing a feminist political agenda (Gouws, 2011). The second implication of the generational divides was the view that older women of the WL were inactive because they were denied opportunities within the ANC, which was a patriarchal organisation, as it was led by traditionalist men like President Zuma. And thirdly, it meant that students believed it would be difficult for a woman to be elected president of South Africa, because most of the people still lived in rural areas and/or had a traditional mind-set. Therefore, the ANC would not nominate a woman to be the next president. Alternatively, even if she were nominated, people would not vote for a female candidate, or they would vote for her only because she was in the ANC and she would be a mere pawn for the men of the party.

Based on the view that women's presence in positions of power is an exception to the cultural norms, it follows that for the students women in positions of power represented *change* from the patriarchal status quo and offered potential role models that are empowering vis-à-vis the existing structures of power. The following exchange with Busisiwe captures this view. Busisiwe was a Black student from a small town in Mpumalanga. Like many other students, she grew up with her grandparents because her mother had to work and could not take care of her, and she received what she described as Christian upbringing. She was from a township, but she said that her family always had food and electricity. Her mother used to work as a clerk, but was currently unemployed; however,

thanks to a bursary that paid for her education, as well as accommodation, her studies were going well. We spoke about NDZ as the potential first female president of South Africa:

Busisiwe: I definitely would [vote for NDZ]. I wouldn't even think twice about it. [laugh]

Ján: But then, she is in the ANC. So that means you would be voting for the ANC as well.

Busisiwe: Exactly, but I guess, what choice do I have? [laugh] ANC rules. But yeah, though I don't agree with some of their strategies, I think as a liberation struggle movement, or as a party, they need that kind of a dramatical change, you know?

Ján: But would she be a dramatic change?

Busisiwe: Yeah, I think so. She's a revolutionary leader, but now, you have these thick-headed men, who are saying this is how this party needs to be run, you understand? So, I think with proper support and back up, she can do it.

Many students believed just like Busisiwe that once in positions of power, women could infuse change into politics, which would address the dire situation in the country, because of the different qualities, ideas and behaviours that they should possess as FPEs. It must be underscored, however, that it was *only women who would meet the FPE expectations* that would be bearers of change, because women, such as many members of the ANC WL, perpetuated patriarchal status quo and hence represented deterrent models instead.

It could be argued that students who held views that challenged patriarchy would feel that they were either rejecting Blackness and their community, or at least that they were putting their belonging into the imaged community into jeopardy. However, the majority of the students did not seem to believe that gender equality was a contradiction to Blackness and they did not struggle with holding views in favour of gender equality. Thus, most students were not intellectually disciplined by the discourse of remembering in the realm of gender relations, but conversely, they were subverting it through their constructed expectations of FPE values, characteristics and behaviours. It is their disregard or conscious subversion of the normative power that suggests that FPEs as ideal versions of exceptional women offer an empowerment resource to the students.

Homogenous constructions of community around racial identifications through the discourses of remembering create a false sense of a unified Black African community, tied to the ANC and others in positions of power and thus help those in power to maintain the oppressive systems in place. However, these narratives disregard the marginalisation of many Black Africans who are oppressed or disadvantaged based on ethnicity, nationality and colour. Expectedly, students often spoke about 'their' people and 'their' community with reference to being Black African in all-encompassing terms, which could have been in response to my particular positionality. However, on several occasions they recognised differences within the community and hierarchies based on perceived stereotypes associated for example with particular nations, peoples, ethnicities or tribes. Their exclusionary othering was often subtle, unnoticed or downplayed. For example, with regards to colourism – being seen as more beautiful if one's skin was of lighter shade – students would talk about a particular woman in politics without knowing her name, which led their fellow discussants to ask, "the dark one?". More importantly, however, several students had personal experiences of being targets of such colour-based othering. Similarly, many non-South African Black Africans spoke about xenophobia in the country and the superiority that some Black South Africans felt vis-à-vis their fellow Black Africans. These tensions within the imagined Black African community periodically re-surface in the public discourses, especially as xenophobic attacks and protests occur. However, the structural causes of these incidents, such as economic disempowerment, continue to be systematically unaddressed (Batisai, 2016; Nyamnjoh, 2016; Paret, 2015; von Holdt, 2013; Alexander, 2010).

In the following section I now turn to the different ways in which the students choose to perform or subvert the particular norms presented as markers of belonging and remembering.

Demonstrating Belonging and Remembering: Humility and Language

The disciplinary power of the remembering discourse is often operationalised through the guilt-inducing accusation that students and other potential social climbers feel *they are better than others*. By raising this criticism people want to bring a sense of shame, as one of the students whom I quoted earlier had said. Deborah James writes in her analysis of the middle class and inequality in South Africa about jealousy as a contributing factor behind MC pressures to consume. She argues:

Jealous is the word commonly used to characterize both those who promote competition by showing off and those who feel slighted by—and desirous to imitate—such status display. Unlike its use in common parlance elsewhere, *jealous* thus applies both to those who fear being envied and to those do the envying [original emphases] (2014, 47).

While the word ‘jealousy’ did not feature in my research overtly and strongly as a term, it emerged as a hidden emotion behind the discourses. Building on James’ argument, one can see how the fear of jealousy and the associated judgement motivates the youth away from seeing themselves as a particular kind of change-makers and exceptions, but not as being better than others.

A common way to prevent the judgement based on the feeling yourself to be better than others was through showing humility, and thus expressing identification and belonging. Grace Khunou (2015, 97) portrays this sentiment in her interview with a PhD-holding Black South African woman, who recalls her apartheid-era childhood as having been taught not to think of herself as better than others or in other words, being instilled humility in light of the plight of the Black poor. Preference for humility amongst my participants is also captured in their praise for those women in politics, such as Thuli Madonsela, who were seen as humble and ‘not showing off’. However, humility was shown by students in my research across socio-economic groups, rather than just Black elites/MC because of the comparative nature of one’s social positioning. As most students compared themselves with both people above and below their perceived economic status,

they always had someone who was doing worse than them and who should not be made to feel inferior.

Language, which serves as a marker of class and distinction, was one of the most frequently used examples of how Black African students chose to demonstrate their belonging and humility. As Southall (2016), Babson (2014) and others find, due to the apartheid education policies, studies in English are for many (Black) parents synonymous with the idea of good education. Hence, they are against their children studying in one of the languages spoken at home. On the other hand, many students recalled experiences when they were criticised for the way they talked and complained that they had to withstand negative backlash against speaking English amongst other Black Africans. A symbol of whiteness and wealth, English separated the students from those, who did not master the language or did not feel confident in its use. Consequently, there were contradictory pressures, which the students had to navigate. Many students' language strategy was therefore a careful avoidance of speaking English at home or in taxis when commuting, as to avoid negative comments and critiques, such as being called a coconut or another similar term ascribing whiteness.

Some students understood the pervasiveness of language norms and the discourse of remembering differently. They questioned why they would even want to speak English at home, as the language did not belong to that sphere of their life and was limited to their professional, university setting. Hence, for some students it was a natural, internalised and desired practice to stay connected to their family, friends and broader community through the use of their home languages. However, even without outward, linguistic expressions of difference, many students said that other people presumed that the students considered themselves to be better than the rest, even if the opposite was true, just by the virtue of their HE and the presumed linguistic skills and potential social mobility.

Frequent examples of political elites, both male and female, that were disciplined on their Blackness and community belonging the same way as the students, were

Lindiwe Mazibuko and Mmusi Maimane – both young members of the DA. Many students believed that people disliked Mazibuko and attacked her in Parliament by calling her a coconut because of her accent and the way she spoke English. With Maimane, several students argued that he switched his accents when speaking English, depending on his audience, sometimes having posh or proper, ‘white’ English accent when speaking to whites and at other times, using a more stereotypical ‘Black’ South African English. His transition between accents can be seen as what Rai (2015) describes as political performance, which, however, decreased rather than increased his legitimacy and authenticity with many Black Africans.

The remembering discourse is, however, also used reversely, namely by politicians to discipline Black Africans. For example, President Zuma made an infamous comment, in which he lambasted “clever blacks,” for having outgrown ‘their’ people. He criticised Black Africans for forgetting their traditions and consequently voting for the DA rather than the ANC. His comments thus operated precisely with this discourse. His derogatory remark exemplifies Zuma’s populist platform and his image of a traditionalist Zulu man, which brought him to power. Zuma positioned himself as the man of the people, a typical, non-exceptional man embedded in (Zulu) culture, who understood the lives and experiences of the poor South Africans, as he himself grew up in poverty and had an extensive family with multiple wives. His use of Zulu in his speeches, as well as the use of songs, became a trade mark that he sustained throughout his two terms in office (de Robillard, 2016; Suttner, 2016a; Gunner, 2015). Louise Vincent (2011) argues that Zuma’s approach brought to the fore populist politics that used to maintain people’s support for the ANC despite the party’s failure to deliver on the promise of post-apartheid transformation. She highlights that the racial and gender-based elements in Zuma’s rhetoric enabled him to establish ‘the Other’ amongst the elites, while positioning himself as the true representatives of the people. Addressing a similar issue in 2017, the DA MP Phumzile van Damme (2017) and ANC’s Yonela Diko (2017) exchanged newspaper blogs on the question of who a Black African DA voter was. Diko argued that these voters underplay racism in South Africa, because they profited from colonialism and

apartheid and have assimilated into whiteness. Hence, they feel better than the rest of the Black people. He juxtaposed them with the educated Black elite of the past that the ANC drew from, creating a standard of Black excellence, and consequently, strengthening the idea that 'true' Black people voted for the ANC. Van Damme in response accused Diko of being patronising towards Black Africans, suggesting that ANC felt it owned them and thus robbed them of agency.

In addition to language, there are many other behaviours attached to Black culture which the students identified as outward signs or performances of distinction from whiteness and hence their markers of belonging and the lack of difference. For example, Keitumetse revealed the judgement she faced when she would play indoors and not outdoors when she was growing up and when – to other people in her community – she was behaving as if she were white. Mickey, spoke about her inability to cook when she moved to varsity and the reactions that she got from her fellow students, who she said had questioned how that was possible, because she was a Black African woman, which meant that she had to cook. She said that although her family was Zulu, she did not speak the language as fluently as she would like. Moreover, she described her parents' relationship as non-traditional, because they both helped each other, instead of her father dominating. Mickey's story clearly highlights the interconnection between race, class, gender and language identities and the way they are often used together to articulate Black African identity.

Students such as Mickey and Keitumetse contested the disciplinary power of the discourses in several ways. Some of these challenges were seen in the realm of the everyday, small acts of rebellion or in the students' ideological stance and personal convictions. Mbali, for example said that she did not mind being called a coconut and she disregarded those who might attack her with a simple, "so what?" Other students, such as Sanele, cut ties with people who they thought were trying to stop them from achieving exceptionalism. Sanele did not have a bursary or a job when we met during her first year at UJ in 2016, nor was she participating in organisations on or off campus. She lived in a township, but she

moved there after having lived for several years in one of the richest neighbourhoods in Gauteng. Her parents were both medical professionals, while her mother had already retired, her father still worked in the public sector. She lived with her parents and commuted to the university, but as she explained, she was happy to live at home and benefit from the care and support of her family, while her parents were trying to “push her out” to become more independent. Looking back at her move from suburbia, she was happy with the move to a township. Yet at the same time, she was critical of many people who lived around her – young people in her community with whom she was not friends:

I don't have friends around my house... it's not people I would associate myself with. Not that I am trying to judge or something, but, you can see situations, neh, you can see people that you can associate yourself with and you can see people, who you cannot associate yourself ... they're not influential, if I must say, they are not people you can chill with and talk about something that is going to build you... they're people who always talk about other people, who always find ways to make sure that people feel bad about themselves, it's not people that I would associate myself with.

Students also waged a counter-critique centred around resisting change. Many believed that people, especially in the older generation, who critiqued their desire for better socio-economic positions or who were against women's equality and greater representation in positions of power, were resisting change. The students therefore placed these people into the realm of tradition, rurality and simplicity, which worked in opposition to the students' youth, modernity and progress. As change was seen by the students as a positive value, it is logical that students would be asserting and empowering themselves by evoking and praising change. While some political theorists and analysts may disregard these acts as apolitical, they do undermine the social order on which the ANC-run state operates. Moreover, as these views translate into the construction of ideal FPEs, the values, characteristics and behaviours which they expect from political elites challenge the status quo. They relegate existing elites into the realm of deterrent models who are different from and non-representative of the ideal version of the students themselves and therefore have political consequences.

The last form of demonstrating remembering and belonging that emerges from the students' experiences and plans for the future, is the expectation that those who remember where they come from, care for other members of the community and show it through their actions, which I explore in the remainder of the chapter.

Remembering as Care

While generally positively perceived as a support mechanism, remembering familial ties and community networks was also seen as a burden and an obstacle, because they represented financial and other commitments. Hence, the ties were potentially limiting the students' future outlooks. The aforementioned Black tax is an expression of this social commitment, and it was often used to challenge the remembering discourse and show its dark side. Sinqobile captured its power quite well. When I asked whether she would want to become an elite, which in her understanding meant someone successful and rich, she rejected the proposition. She explained herself by pointing out the expectations that others would have of her. She believed they would want her to provide jobs for their cousins and to do them other favours, and she just did not want to deal with that pressure.

Black tax also featured in the Fallist critique of the NSFAS scheme, which at the time of my research operated as a loan scheme, rather than a grant or a scholarship. This meant that the recipients were expected to pay back the state once they got employed. However, according to some activists, once Black African students got jobs, they had to take care of their extended families, who counted on their financial support; or in other words, they had to pay Black tax. It is therefore not surprising that NSFAS had a very low level of repayment and a more sustainable funding solutions were desperately needed. Aria explained the issue very passionately in her group discussion, which took place at the heat of the FMF protests in October 2016. She said:

With NSFAS, ... if your parents work for the government, you're automatically rejected. ... which is actually quite wrong, because

what they don't realise is that in South Africa, I don't know [about] elsewhere, but in South Africa, Black people suffer from Black tax... you need to pay for your other siblings,... and varsity is actually quite expensive, coz it's the fees, it's the books as well, it's the accommodation, it's money to actually feed you, to keep you going.

And another thing why I also feel that most university students don't support the cause of #FeesMustFall is that ... NSFAS students get confused thinking that NSFAS is free. NSFAS is not free... it's a loan... which, then when you work, it's not like you're working for yourself, but you're gonna be working for NSFAS with your Black tax and everything else at the end of the day you become disadvantaged even though you earn money that you could use.

Black tax was thus both a responsibility and an expectation, as well as a disadvantage associated with being a member of the racial community in a society that privileged whiteness. The concept thus worked as a critique of structural racism perpetuated in South Africa, and as a form of subversion of the pressure to remember where you come from, which circumscribed aspirations for exceptionalism. Hence, the critique of remembering co-existed with its acceptance.

While Black Africans expressed the narratives of *remembering* most frequently, similar discourses and associated tensions arose amongst Coloured and white students as well. Due to the stereotypes about Coloured South Africans, held by other racial groups as much as by many Coloured South Africans themselves, those who strove for exceptionalism were also being disciplined by accusations of feeling better than the rest. While the racially-bound, community-based disciplining was less prevalent amongst white students in my research, many Afrikaner students in particular had a strong sense of identity tied to their Boer history, Afrikaans language or Christian values (most frequently associated with the NGK). The discourses thus had a similar mode of operation and effect on them as their Black African peers, but most students did not convey such narratives, nor did they suggest that they were worried about exclusion and non-belonging.

Many white and Indian/Asian students said they felt the pressure not to show their economic status in front of students from other racial and economic backgrounds. In that sense, humility and remembering where their Black African peers came from disciplined the white and Indian/Asian students to limit their sense of eliteness. Some of them rejected this pressure, which they perceived as an attempt to make them feel guilty about apartheid and sins of the past. As much as they recognised its despicable nature, they felt they had not contributed to apartheid's racism and they should not be held responsible for it. At the same time, the sense of commitment and responsibility towards their own families and community was very strong for both white and Indian/Asian students, meaning that the narratives of remembering their community were pertinent for the students, albeit in a much smaller sense of familial relations. This could be seen, for example, in their desire to take their families with them should they emigrate from South Africa, or in their hesitation to emigrate without their family in the first place.

Connected to the idea of remembering one's community, both the privileged as well as the economically marginalised students believed in 'giving back to the communities,' working with members of their communities or at least going into various communities to do charity work. 'Community' often served as a discursive symbol of poverty, marginalisation, and disempowerment. Consequently, any assistance to the communities is vested with a priori positive value, and activities that bring political and other elites or social climbers closer to the community are praised and perceived as morally worthy. Terry Cannon (2018) captures this process of virtue signalling in his analysis of development practice, whereby practitioners replace terms like places or people with community because the term signals moral attributes and romanticised versions of what interventions can do with and for people. For instance, a student used the following defence of her privilege and being different from those people who do not remember others because of their economic status. She said:

For example, my mother and my father always say, give back. Give back – it's a very cliché thing to say, but give back, go to orphanages, go to townships, ... one thing I actually want to do is

live a day in the person's, like literally, in their shoes. Forget about your phone, for example, forget about a certain type of brand and actually put yourself in someone else's shoes and try to help out and see that not everything in the world is pretty and we should be there for each other.

Remembering the community is thus expressed as care for its members, which stands in opposition to the aforementioned self-interest and greed that was associated with eliteness. Therefore, it is yet another method of downward identification or subversion of the difference as seen with pretend modesty of the elite or showing humility and thus overcoming power inequality and difference. Moreover, these demonstrations of remembering also speak to the notions of empathy, mentioned in Chapter Three.

Similarly, the students expected political elites, both male and female, not to forget the poor and the marginalised Black African people, whether it be 'their community,' if the political elites were Black African themselves, or just 'the community' if they were from other racial groups. While the students expected all leaders to put the interest of the people before their own, the gender stereotype of women's natural tendency to nurture and care led the students to have higher expectations of women in politics to be caring. As a student put it, the same way a mother would rather have torn up clothes to ensure her children are fed, the FPEs need to think about others before themselves. Therefore, it is more pertinent to speak about remembering as care, rather than as service with regards to female political elites, as I suggest in my previous discussion of Ubuntu leadership in Chapter Six.

As a result of the students' conviction that women were naturally inclined to be caring, they concluded that bringing more women who meet the FPE ideal into politics would mean positive changes for the poor and for the country. They believed that moving away from male-controlled decision-making through greater inclusion of FPEs would ultimately contribute to a more equal society, not just in gender-related matters. FPEs were thus perceived both as a *change* in itself and as *change makers*, because they were perceived as 'nurturing' and

‘motherly’. As such, the constructed ideal FPE based on various role models, represented for the students a source of empowerment.

Although the ANC WL was largely perceived to be an institution of *grandmothers*, most of the students believed that the League failed to meet their motherly behaviour in their politics. Put differently, they were perceived as having forgotten where they came from and thus not care about the most vulnerable in society and hence were deterrent models, whose behaviour was to be avoided. The students used multiple examples to prove this claim, including the case of then Minister of Social Development, Bathabile Dlamini, who was in the media limelight for the near collapse of the social grants system, which was overseen by the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), and which reported to her Department. At the time of my research, the South African state’s provision of grants had been outsourced to a private company, Cash Paymaster Services (CPS), which was responsible for the entire provision chain, including stocking cashpoints and providing people with biometric ID cards to access their welfare grants. The contract with CPS had been declared invalid by the Constitutional Court (ConCourt) due to the breach of the procurement legislature. However, in March 2017 the contract had to be extended by ConCourt, as SASSA and the Department failed to find a new provider by the fast approaching April deadline. ConCourt made the decision in order to avoid the life-threatening impacts on millions of people who depend on grants, while SASSA and the Department were mandated to find a new provider under the Court’s strict supervision.

As the head of the Department, Dlamini was in the centre of the crisis and was critiqued for allowing the situation to escalate to the brink and endangering people’s lives. Many politicians and civil society representatives called for her resignation. She was especially criticised as being incompetent by ConCourt’s Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng, who enjoyed high respect in the country (Chabalala and Raborife, 2017). The situation surrounding the SASSA grants manifested the students’ widely held view that many female politicians were pursuing policies that did not remember the community and that they did not think about the needs of others. Put differently, women in politics appeared to

have lost or given up on their inherent motherly trait to care for others, and instead pursued self-interest and greed as elites.

The students' views of women as nurturing and caring had several iterations. Some argued that women were more emotional than men, which enhanced their caring qualities, because they were more sensitive and aware of the issues that South African people faced. This interpretation made their emotions into a strength and some proponents of this view therefore criticised rationality as a male-centred standard of leadership, which meant that women in politics were treated unfairly. Emotions were not necessarily seen as a driving force in the behaviour of women in politics, but an underlying force that enabled their better awareness, understanding, and empathy with the community. On the other hand, there were several students who concluded that as a result of women's emotions, many women failed to be good leaders. Accordingly, only women who portrayed traits of rationality, objectivity and emotionless decision-making succeed in becoming good leaders. However, rather than believing that women could not be good leaders, women had to be masculine in order to meet the leadership expectations.

Zanele held this view. Her perspective seemed to contradict her self-portrayal of being a strong young female leader. She had decided to come to UJ from KZN to get away from her family, gain independence and to study a degree that her mother disapproved of. She considered her mother to be an elite, having managed to provide a good life for Zanele and her siblings without her husband, Zanele's father, who had passed away when she was a child. While still in her first year of university, Zanele said she took on a role of a lay preacher in her res. She said she was in favour of women taking leadership positions, but not in an equal measure as men, because of their emotions. The most important leadership positions should, according to her, be taken by men. An example she and other students used to prove women's emotional or overly sensitive character was Baleka Mbete. Mbete was criticised for her inability to control the parliamentary chambers when she presided over the Assembly sessions. While to some students it showed more the patriarchal nature of the institution and sexism of

the male MPs, as they believed men disregarded Mbete because she was a woman, others saw in it a lack of control over her emotions, which led Mbete to having patronizing outbursts and scolding her fellow MPs.

Being Steadfast and Independent

In light of the observed uncaring behaviour of ANC women and the negative consequences that it brought to the country, the students believed that FPEs must be strong and not easily swayed from their values. They should stay steadfast and not crumble under pressure in order to avoid being like those women, who give in to male domination or to their elite self-interest and greed. An exceptional woman in politics that met this expectation for many students, was yet again, Thuli Madonsela. Lutho participated in a group discussion as a first year student who came to UJ on a bursary and who was not actively involved in organisations on or off campus. She was from the Eastern Cape and identified as Black South African, and she described her sentiments about Madonsela as follows:

I'm just one of the hugest fans of Thuli Madonsela. Honestly, I'm not even gonna lie. The reason why she is such an inspiration and such a female political elite, is because, number one, someone says you're not intimidated, she is not intimidated by anything. You know, she does not, ... shiver in the presence of you know, somebody as big as you'd say for example the president, because she was able to actually stand firm you know, until the thing [president's unduly benefitting from publicly funding upgrades to his homestead in Nkandla] was solved, ... she is such a [sigh] strength, a power that, you know, it makes you yourself want to stand and want, you know, make yourself heard, because you've seen her.

In addition to the exceptionalism of Madonsela's behaviour in the realm of politics, students admired many other women who found their voice and stood up to power and hence who were empowering role models for the students by changing the status quo. For example, some non-Black African students expressed their admiration for Malala Yousafzai, a young Pakistani woman, who was revered for standing up for her desire to get education despite the grave danger that she faced. For other students, young women involved in the

aforementioned protest at the Pretoria High School for Girls, who stood up against racial discrimination, represented similar courage and bravery as Madonsela. The experiences of the Pretoria Girls' students, for example, echoed the experiences of my research participants, many of whom said that when they were in school, they had not understood the rules on hair styling as institutional racism. They saw them only as generic rules that they had to follow, and therefore, they did not think to challenge them. Many other students, however, said they were aware of the racist nature of the policies, but chose not to act on them, which made the Pretoria Girls' protest much more admirable.⁴⁸ Considering students' own experiences with not wanting to or not being able to stand up and challenge power, helps to explain why they assigned such importance to strength and steadfastness as a trait in an FPE.

Steadfastness was closely associated with the expectation that women need to be economically independent in order to have control over their lives, which most students clearly desired for themselves. For example, many Black African students were critical of rules that they were expected to follow at home. Despite being critical of these norms, many chose not to speak up against them out of strategic considerations, namely being dependent on the family's financial support. When I asked the students how they pictured themselves in 10 years' time, most of the students envisioned themselves as economically secure, stable or independent even if they did not have a specific career in mind or a detailed vision how to achieve that. While some expressed it as having their own jobs and income, others spoke about *not depending* on their parents or others. For example, Sanele said this about her future:

OK, how old am I now, 19, right? [In] 10 years' time, I will be 29. Right. Just living off my own money, like owning my own house and stuff, not marriage, it's too early, 29 is too early for marriage, I think. So, and it's too early for a baby too. So, yah, I'll just keep on hustling until I get my money, when I am 29, when I am 29 I know I will be living off my money and I won't depend on anyone. People in my life can just come and go if I have my own money.

⁴⁸ Yet again it must be noted that racial identifications are no predeterminations of students' agency or victimhood, as students *across* racial and class backgrounds experienced powerlessness and empowerment in various situations in their lives.

Just like Sanele, many students iterated their desire to achieve independence before getting married or having children. It is not a surprise that most of my participants drew this conclusion in light of the vulnerability discourses that I outline in Chapter Three. Stories of young women such as Karabo Mokoena and others, who depended on so-called sugardaddies or blessers – men who give money, material gifts or other forms of economic security for women in exchange for their companionship or other sexual relations (eNCA, 2016a) – emphasise the need for financial independence. The FMF campaigns also contributed to bringing the desperate situations of many female students to the public domain, highlighting stories of young women and men squatting in university bathrooms overnight or not being able to afford personal hygiene products. Moreover, many of the students saw this vulnerability in the life experiences of their own mothers, who they thought were dependent on the students' fathers, partners or other relatives, because without education and jobs, they needed the support of others to make ends meet.

Most importantly, however, for many women at UJ, such as aforementioned Sharon, Nonkululeko or Arya, the desire for economic independence came from their own personal experiences. When Arya, a young mother from a township, was pondering what her life would be like by the time she was 31, she spoke about having saved money for the education of her child and her younger brother. She also wanted to take care of her parents before starting to care for herself:

Arya: I would have loved to, you know, start at home [meaning taking care of her parents and family] before I can do things for myself, coz ..., having a child before marriage [claps] and at a young age, ... it's wrong and you know it's a disappointment to your parents. ...

Ján: Did you feel that you were disappointing your parents? Or that it was a failure?

Arya: Because they knew the guy, they didn't really feel that. ... They had hope in this guy, because you know, he paid the damages for [child's name], he did *everything*. You know, he paid your [Arya's] school fees, even my mom was like, I take this as a lobola ... so I, don't think they were *really* disappointed, but, [a] *bit* of

disappointment considering the fact that you don't have a degree, what if this person leaves or what you're going to do, you know?

Arya's concerns about being left alone with a child, without a degree and thus any means of getting a decent job shows the extent to which the female vulnerability affects the students. Gqola (2015) argues that patriarchy in South Africa operates a "fear factory" that is linked to violence, which polices women's behaviour, and Arya's concern could be seen as part of this South African reality.

Arya's comments also highlight that independence does not mean individualism or selfishness, but it is part and parcel of caring for the community and the family and hence was not a sign of elite distinction and difference. Bucie's desire for independence functioned in the same way. Bucie was one of those students who spoke about her desire for economic independence because she believed it would give her a voice and an ability to withstand pressures from those in power, namely her family's elders. For her, independence did not mean that she wanted to care only about herself and her own success. She said that she was studying to get a good job that would allow her to pay for her nephew's education, once he was ready to go to university. She also wanted to give her mother a beautiful house, just like the ones she saw on TV. Being independent, therefore, did not mean reneging on responsibilities for the community. It meant being financially stable and comfortable enough to help others too. The expectation of FPEs to be caring and steadfast/independent is therefore very much a construction connected to the students' lives, as women in politics were seen to not meet these expectations. The empowerment resource and the role model effect, therefore stemmed from the FPE ideal, which was articulated vis-à-vis the anti-heroes amongst most women in politics.

It could be argued that this desire for independence on one hand and care on the other, is best seen as *interdependence*, and thus a value captured by the Ubuntu philosophy, and an expression of the communitarianism of the Black African culture. The desire for independence, however, is shared by students from other socio-economic and racial groups as well, who equally seek to be independent from their parents and future partners, even if many of them are aware of the

safety net that their parents can offer, as well as the privileged starting position they have on the journey towards independence. They also wish to ensure that their families are taken care of. Therefore, based on the self-articulated vision of the students' future, most young women across racial groups subscribe to the gendered norms of care for others and hence conceive of themselves in relationships to others. Consequently, it is more revealing to think about the students' desire for independence and steadfastness as a result of the intersections of neoliberal, racial, patriarchal market competition and precariousness, rather than as a consequence of Ubuntu.

Women's economic independence was seen by several students to be in contradiction to gender norms, which arise from some religious teachings. These religious norms depict the man as the head of the household and the breadwinner. While some students argued that because their particular Christian, Hindu or Muslim beliefs were based on different interpretations of these religions, their views about gender equality were not in contradiction to their faith. However, a few students felt they would go against their religion if they became an FPE, because that would mean they had to be economically independent and challenge the man's roles and responsibilities. One student, for example, resolved the dilemma for herself by deferring marriage aspirations until she has achieved what she wanted in her professional life. Only then would she settle down and adjust her life into the marriage situation. Similarly, other students were planning on giving up their professional life at their husbands' requests or for family demands, although the majority would do so only temporarily, while their children were of a certain, younger age, or they would give up some of their jobs, while still continuing other activities on the side. These 'side activities' ranged from charity and volunteering to managing and overseeing a business. Thus, many students did not find it problematic to challenge patriarchal gender norms due to their association with culture, and Black culture in particular, but those who found it difficult did so due to their religious beliefs.

The last iteration of remembering as care that many students associated with FPEs, was their expectation that women who succeed in gaining positions of power should help other women achieve the same. Unlike discourses surrounding gender-based quotas, which appear to be more visibly associated with undeserved privilege and unfairness, women helping other women get to the top was not explicitly perceived in such terms. Most of the students with this view believed that the FPEs' assistance should take a form of mentoring – showing others the path and advising them on how to reach the top positions. As such, it did not compromise the value of deserving or achieving, because women would still work hard towards their own success.

According to the students, this form of collaboration and help was an ideal approach, but it was exceptional, because women tended to be in competition with each other and to be judgemental of one another. While the students did not mention incidents involving specific women in politics that would manifest this assumed competitive behaviour, besides the aforementioned fall-out between Helen Zille and Lindiwe Mazibuko, the students' personal observations and experiences from other contexts made them believe that competition amongst women in politics had to exist, because the opportunities for women were few. Thato was a student from a township in Gauteng, who was studying in order to get a job as a community worker. She was a member of a volunteering society for community engagement, and she even joined a student political organisation, which she said was a calculated, practical choice, rather than a reflection of her deep political commitments and values. She was the first one in her family to go to university and she had to take a gap year after matriculating, because she did not have enough money to pay for her studies at the time. As she wanted to help other people, it was important for her to see women in politics help other women and she believed that FPEs as leaders had to inspire others – being inspirational, empowering and encouraging were qualities that she, as many others, expected of an ideal FPE. Thato observed:

They [men] talk to each other... we as women, sometimes do not push each other to get wherever, because you'd be like, OK, she's pregnant, she didn't finish her matric and we judge her: 'No, eish,

she likes things, she likes partying' ... so I feel if we have more women empowering women, then we'll have a number of women sitting in political things, so we should empower each other.

Thato's statement also draws out the aforementioned gender norms associated with what it means to be a 'good girl'. According to the students, it was judgments against these norms that created barriers to women working together and helping each other.

In light of the students' perceptions of being judged by other women, many students expressed appreciation for the group discussions that were part of my research. Many described the FGDs as settings where they could freely engage with one another without feeling judged. However, some had negative feelings towards their fellow discussants, which they shared with me during our follow-up interviews. For example, Arya was very critical of another member in her group, because according to her, she was flaunting her class, her experiences and networks. Put differently, Arya believed she lacked humility and portrayed herself as better than others, which echoes the aforementioned discourse disciplining students' exceptionalism, and the female-on-female normative judgements. While such competition amongst women is a stereotype, it was perceived by the students in gendered terms, and thus it impacts their expectations of FPE behaviour. In the context of experiences where young people, and women in particular, continue to be subjected to various forms of violence, it is understandable that an ideal version of an exceptional, elite woman, should help other women. In many students' view, helping other women who are deserving of assistance arises as a sign of care in a racialised, classed, and sexist society. Therefore, an ideal FPE becomes an empowering resource against the structures of domination.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have offered a set of values, characteristics, and behaviours that students attached to the ideal of an FPE, which stem from the discourse of *remembering where you come from*. I have argued that this homogenising discourse seeks to discipline the students in their desire for social mobility and

exceptionalism by the threat of exclusion from an imagined community of belonging and thus perpetuates the status quo by enforcing ideas about elite difference and by further painting political elites in particular as greedy, selfish anti-heroes. In the case of Black African students, the community was organised around the articulations of Blackness, which included a static notion of culture or tradition. The students' adherence and/or subversion of the norms and markers of belonging revolved for example around showing humility or making particular linguistic choices, which were always classed and gendered. The disciplinary power of this discourse was applied as much in the private as in the public realm, and it serves those in the positions of power to maintain the existing social order, while permitting unthreatening, un-transformative change.

As a result of this discourse, many students across racial and class backgrounds expected ideal FPEs to show their remembering by being caring. Based on the students' gendered perceptions of care, FPEs should care for the community more than their male counterparts, and hence, their increased presence in politics ought to bring change into the selfish and greedy elite spaces. In order to demonstrate and deliver caring policies, an FPE was also expected to be steadfast and independent in order to withstand the pressures in the male dominated and corrupt world of politics, similarly to the students having to be independent from their (future) families and partners to make it in life. Hence, the norms and discourses that shaped the students' private lives had direct parallels in the public sphere, which underscores the fallacy of the dichotomy. It also shows the need for analysing students' lived realities in order to understand symbolic representation, and for recognising students' agency in the empowering mechanism of the role model effect.

9 Conclusion: Empowerment through Constructed Ideals

Guided by the research question, *To what extent do female university students in present day South Africa consider values, characteristics and behaviours represented by female political elites, when they make decisions they deem important to their lives?* this thesis provided an analysis of the mechanism through which women in politics serve as role models. As such, it contributes to gender and politics literature, which examines how intersecting systems of power operate in relation to political institutions, as well as how these systems become normalised and challenged. By concentrating on young women at university I brought into focus of the RME analysis people's lived experiences and the disciplinary power of norms, which underpin the social order in which they function. This shift in focus of feminist political scholarship, as seen in much of the global South, highlights diverse sources, mechanisms and manifestations of power as pertaining to politics, and thus brings women in politics to their rightful proximity to other women and men, who serve as role models and empowerment resources for young women. My expansion upon the RME mechanism also provides a lens through which to understand the contemporary South African social order and how it impacts female students' understanding and engagement with politics. To the best of my knowledge, such research has not been conducted in and on South Africa to date, and hence my thesis adds to the knowledge of the country, as well as the theories on gender and political representation.

In order to answer the research question, I moved away from methodologies adopted in much of the existing scholarship on the RME in political sciences in North American and European academia, and conducted qualitative, FGD- and interview-based data collection. These methods enabled university students to articulate the values, characteristics and behaviours that they associated with female political elites, and to identify decisions that they deemed important to their lives without any pre-conceived, prescriptive limitations. I conceptualised my analytical approach based on the insights from role model literature, combined with elite studies and intersectionality theorising on difference, identity and power. Understanding role models and anti-heroes as construals of

those who perceive them based on the levels of similarity and difference, brings forward the potential of elites to contribute to the construction of empowering normative resources within intersecting systems of power that operate through constructed notions of identity and difference. Ultimately the thesis shows that students create empowering resources in the values, characteristic and behaviours of FPEs that they construct as an ideal version of themselves. These emerge based on their exposure to and experiences with a wide and diverse sets of role models and deterrent models, who are embedded in the context of 'glocal' norms and discourses. Hence, women in politics play an important part in shaping the set of expectations for ideal FPEs that serve as role models and that provide empowerment resources for the students.

Key Findings on Role Models, Empowerment and Political Elites

Considering firstly the research sub-question, *What are the key decisions that the students have made so far?* I show that most of the young women said that coming to UJ was their most important decision and it was grounded in their belief that the economic and political situation in South Africa required a flexible approach to life planning. Against this understanding of their society as being marked by instability and flux, students found inspiration in people's histories and experiences, which showed them how to navigate through life rather than how to get into a particular career. The students' role models and anti-heroes, which demonstrated how one can achieve some iteration of wellbeing and success, therefore stemmed from various backgrounds and contexts, rather than from within a particular educational or career field.

In this decision-making context, I find that most women in politics did not serve as role models that would draw young university students into politics or who would be seen as directly relevant for the students' decision-making in other career or educational matters. It was the lack of information about leading women politicians' personal and professional lives that represented a critical hindrance to the RME in the iteration most commonly explored in the literature. However, the lack of conscious consideration of women in politics as role models ought to be understood within the broader context in which students often chose

courses out of a desire to obtain any higher education degree which they hoped would give them a comparative advantage en route towards a better quality of life. For these young women, university education continued to be perceived as a pre-requisite for a possibility to secure a decent life, even if many no longer accepted it as a guarantee of such well-being and recognised that entrepreneurship was an alternative not requiring a degree.

The rejection of women in politics as role models is attributed by some feminists to the specific kind of politics and femininities that these women tend to portray and subscribe to. In South Africa, scholars apply this critique to the ANC Women's League and female members of the ANC in particular, as they represent the majority of female political office holders. In response to the sub-question, *Who are female political elites according to the students?* and how does the students' understanding of eliteness change based on gendered expectations and the realm of politics, I show that the students considered primarily women in offices which provided them with access to power, including the members of the ANC WL. Being part of the corrupt political machinery of the state and being considered elites, women of the ANC were often seen as greedy and selfish and hence would better be understood as deterrent models, whose values, characteristics, and behaviours should be avoided. Consequently, eliteness was not a desirable status or something to aspire towards.

When eliteness was reinterpreted as leadership and if it was disguised as middle classness, however, students were able to use the idea of an FPE to construct an ideal version of themselves. They were thus able to attach to the idea of an FPE norms that were inspiring and empowering, and which they were able to construct based on women and men to whom they were exposed to, as well as from their lived experiences that shaped their daily realities and which were the product of the South African social order. Because of the elite-leader connection, the students as leaders were ultimately able to aspire towards social mobility and change through eliteness.

The rejection of many specific women in politics as ideal FPEs was connected to the students' perception of these politicians as subservient because of their race and age and their socialisation in a different era. Being part of the older generations of Black African women, most women in politics were perceived to have internalised the subservient femininity. Many students associated this femininity with Black African culture and tradition, which according to the them, enables men to take advantage of women and push them to the sidelines. Yet, many students who thought critically of most ANC women still found inspiration in the idea that a Black African woman, such as Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma (NDZ), had made it to the highest level of continental politics and was in the running to become the president of the country. What transpired from such a seeming contradiction was that students became driven by the idea of what they thought women in politics should do in order to deserve the FPE label and what they would have done to achieve their elite status. In other words, in light of missing information that the students wanted to know in order to adjudicate politicians' meeting of FPE expectations, they drew on assumptions of the FPE ideal instead. The students were thus inspired by generalised values, characteristics, and behaviours, which they vested in the FPE ideal. This process signals their personal agency in the construction of FPE norms which they draw on as an empowerment resource, and which is frequently neglected in the RME theorising and research.

NDZ, amongst other female politicians, was rejected by some students as meeting the FPE expectations for her presumed ascendancy to power through the connection to her ex-husband, which they argued meant that she had not achieved and deserved her position of power and privilege. However, those students, who believed that her success was due to her credentials as an educated medical doctor and a former cabinet member, and due to her perseverance against racism and patriarchy as a Black African woman, found her to be a role model and an FPE, despite her affiliation with corruption and patronage in politics and in the Zuma-dominated ANC in particular. The need for women in politics to deserve their positions, mirrors the students' own expectations that rewards, whether it be power, privilege, welfare or another

form of success, need to be deserved and achieved. The discourses of 'being deserving', and 'remembering where you come from' seek to discipline the students' social mobility aspirations towards eliteness and their desire to become and to see themselves as elites. These disciplinary discourses thus maintain the existing systems and structures of power. Out of these discourses arises the answer to the final sub-question, *What are the values, characteristics and behaviours that they expect of female political elites?* The students expected FPEs as their ideal selves to be educated, hard-working, active, caring, steadfast, and independent. It is this ideal version of the student that drives them to aspire towards changing their own lives as well as their communities and society more broadly. Hence, it is this ideal that delivers the emancipative potential attached to women in positions of political power and which offers a way to challenge elites in power.

Throughout the thesis I therefore argue that women in politics are an empowerment resource for female university students to the extent that they contribute together with other women and men to the construction of the students' ideal self, which is attached to the notion of a 'female political elite'. I show that the students articulate their ideal FPE in light of what they perceive amongst female politicians as much as other women and men in the country. They assess whether women in politics meet these expectations or not and individual women in politics often failed to be directly understood and accepted as normative resources. Despite many women in politics and other elites being seen as deterrent models and anti-heroes, the students were able to be inspired and empowered by a constructed image of an ideal self that FPEs represented as a culmination of diverse sets of role models and it is this diversity that represents the cornerstone of the desired RME.

Implications for the RME Theorising

While gender scholars such as Lombardo and Meier (2014) and Squires (2008), have been drawing our attention to the multiplicity of ways that gender norms are constructed through and around women in politics, the citizens' active role and agency in the process have been undervalued within the complex web of

actors who co-construct these social meanings. Most RME literature and feminist advocacy surrounding women in politics innately treat women outside of politics as recipients and perceivers of norms. Their agency is only manifested in political participation, by which they respond to what they perceive. As Lombardo and Meier (2017) point out, contestation around symbols is amongst various meanings that are constructed and attached to them, and it is up to the principal to recognise them and either accept or reject them. Consequently, most RME scholars in western political sciences have focused on analysing what women should do (substantive representation) and who they should be (descriptive markers) to either succeed or fail in becoming role models, and the citizens have been reduced to variables of the predetermined identities and political preferences, which either do or do not become salient. Having made the citizen into the research focal point in this thesis has enabled their agency to come through the mesh of actors, who co-construct the meaning of the symbol.

The neglect of people's agency in the construction of norms arises when women in politics are treated similarly to symbols that are inanimate objects or concepts, such as flags or currencies as symbols of nations. However, as human beings they are better understood as symbolic *agents*, because they are able to act independently of the constructed meaning that they evoke. Hence, there is a crucial difference between the normative meaning(s) evoked by their presence and the norms enacted by individual women in politics. Carefully separating these two elements of symbolic representation then brings to the fore that the emancipative effect of women in politics as role models is actually delivered by the normative meaning behind the symbol that the citizens construct themselves, rather than the symbolic agents.

Consequently, in order to understand the role model function, it is crucial to analyse people's lives – the norms and discourses that structure their everyday experiences. As my research substantiates, students did not separate their personal lives, their lived experiences and perceptions from the construction process of FPEs, but articulated their expectations based on their exposure to diverse women and men, ranging from their mothers to businesswomen like

Bonang and Oprah as well as political elites like Thuli Madonsela and Winnie Madikizela-Mandela. Hence FPEs need to be analysed in the most expansive context of the society, not just in the realm of politics as understood in the theories from and for the global North. This is primarily because elites were understood as leaders and as exceptional versions of the students themselves. They were rooted in the everyday, social and private spheres of the students and were not limited to the falsely dichotomised political vs. private sphere. Therefore, the normative ideal of FPEs is intrinsically conceptualised to be a role model and thus the empowering function of women in politics – the mechanism of the RME – is actually rooted construction process.

De-homogenizing Youth in Times of Fallism

By mapping the norms that students attached to women in politics and to an ideal FPE the study contributes to the understanding of the social order in South Africa from the perspective of young women pursuing HE. The students' experiences captured in this research corroborate the extensive body of South African scholarship, which highlights the ruptures in the country's social fabric as I discuss in Chapter Three. These ruptures are seen in the distrust of the system, as well as of people perceived to be privileged by the systems of power, leading to the students' desire for experience-based knowledge and representation. While many commentators and policy makers have focused on analysing the role of race, class, gender and age as the main sources of difference and cleavages in South Africa, applying them *in their intersections* as well as in a non-prescribed delimitations to the university students vis-à-vis both other generations and women in positions of power, is often missing or marginalised.

Additionally, my research shows the importance of de-homogenizing youth and university students, which tend to be essentialised by the narratives of the Born-Free (BF) generation or by considering students as a subgroup of this specific youth generation. The BF narratives have been widely critiqued by the students active in the Fallist protests, highlighting the fallacy and naivety of the rainbow nation promise vested in the post-1994 generation. At the same time, many of the young people, including my participants who were not politically active,

embraced their generational identity and the BF label, as a response to the marginalisation by the older generations in power. While challenging gerontocratic power, many students did not subscribe to radical activism nor did they agree with violence and contestation as forms of political engagement in response to structural violence in HE or in South African society more broadly. Instead, they preferred coalition and consensus building. These contradictions become visible due to an intersectional examination of the students' lives and thus challenge simplistic narratives articulated predominantly on male experiences, worldviews and desires, which accompanied the student protests and campaigns in the 2016-2017 period.

Implications for Future Research and Feminist Advocacy

The understanding of the RME mechanism articulated in this thesis suggests that feminist advocacy and future research might benefit from some changes in their focus and approaches. Firstly, feminist political science research in western academia which has been driving the RME theorising would be enhanced by stepping outside of its disciplinary silo and working much more comprehensively and intersectionally with concepts of power, as has been done by many scholars in the global South, and South African feminists in particular. As my research also shows, FPE expectations were a result of the students' own experiences with caring, hard-working and sacrificing female guardians,⁴⁹ together with their own ambitions to bring change to their families and communities. Therefore, it becomes important to research the impact of women in politics in conjunction with women in other sectors, such as business or media, rather than in isolation, as well as men who influence people's understanding of their world. As such, this research also substantiates that change of norms is a complex, holistic process in which political power works in combination with other forms of power, which cannot be artificially ignored or separated. In practice this would mean that future symbolic representation scholarship would be strengthened by focusing on in-depth understanding of women's lives and identifications, as much as the socio-political conditions of the specific time and context. Otherwise, the research community that focuses on

⁴⁹ It must be underscored that not all students had experiences with such women in their lives.

gender and politics risks misunderstanding the impact that women in politics have on female citizens and vice-versa, as well as simplifying and misrepresenting people's political behaviour.

Secondly, the findings and theoretical implications of this research suggest that the empowering and emancipative effect of women in politics as role models is less dependent on the prevalence of women in positions of power, the particular positions and roles that they occupy, or the policies that they pursue, but on women's exposure to a *variety* of women in the public and private domains. The issue of variety becomes clear due to the highly diverse, unequal and polarised nature of South African society, together with the prevalence of corruption and patronage. As I show, while Thuli Madonsela was for many the embodiment of the FPE expectations and an icon due to her perceived steadfast fight for justice and for the people, women like Helen Zille, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela or NDZ, despite all the controversies that were attached to them, also represented some ideal characteristics of a female political elite-leader. Their differences, compared and contrasted against other women and men in the students' lives, allowed the students to pick and choose characteristics, values and behaviours that were of importance to them. Hence, the variety of women on the political scene enabled the students to critically consider what their ideal should look like and draw empowerment resources from these ideals to seek to change the status quo.

Future research into the relative importance of variety of and amongst women in politics, could be usefully explored in other contexts. In this study, the geographical focus on South Africa and its specific set of historical, socio-economic and political circumstances created the underlying conditions, whereby women's presence in political decision-making is well established, albeit contested with regards to the (e)quality of their power. Many post-colonial countries, which are also gerontocratic, patriarchal and divided along economic inequality, have lower representation of women in these positions, while still having some women who represent the ideal values attached to FPEs in other sectors and in people's private lives. Hence, a comparison with these contexts

would further enhance our understanding of the roles that FPEs play and would supply further evidence for the most effective tools for application of the RME. Similarly, replicating the study in non-democratic contexts, where women's ability to be active in positions of power is affected by different political mechanisms, might equally lead to further nuancing of the theory. In the South African context, the ANC party-state, the anti-apartheid struggle, and democratic constitutionalism, together with the powerful role of the courts, have created specific circumstances, which shape the students' perceptions of the realm of possibility for political engagement. Hence, it could be expected that FPE norms might change as a result of different political contexts, despite the students' exposure to a diverse set of women who meet the FPE ideal in other sectors and which might potentially allow the articulation of the student's ideal self.

Thirdly, the findings surrounding eliteness suggest the need to further explore whether to reclaim, redefine or substitute the notion of 'female political elite' in order to enhance the RME potential of women in politics. While the concept of an FPE allowed the South African university students to articulate the ideal version of themselves, it was a highly contested term due to its multiple, contradictory interpretations. The difficulty with which being an FPE was approached by the students highlights the need to investigate whether and how to reclaim and redefine the idea of being an elite from its frequently abused discursive, populist shorthand. The positive re-interpretation of the term that would highlight leadership, achievement, hard work and struggle is one potential approach. However, reclaiming female political eliteness might not be plausible in a political climate defined by rampant racialised neoliberalism combined with patronage and corruption and their consequent mistrust and suspicion.

The difficulty lies with the close interlink of neoliberal values with the notion of deservedness. As I show in the examples of students' discourses of HE, it is through hard work that many students feel they deserve their entitlements or privileges, while women in positions of power are equally expected to deserve their posts. Often perceived as either saints or sinners, madonnas or whores (Smith 2018), women's deservedness is not detached from these gendered

binaries as the frequent attacks on the sexual relations of women in politics substantiate. Consequently, future research on the RME might focus on exploring the potential of eliteness as an empowering concept in other neo-liberal patriarchal contexts. This could be for example in countries which share South African discourses of working class struggle and downward class identification within broader post-colonial setting. Alternatively, it could be explored in countries where upper-class identification has the reversed connotation to the one observed in South Africa, and where the discourses of 'remembering where you come from' in their class or race/ethnicity-based iterations might differ.

Future explorations of the RME through the FPE might also engage with other populations in South Africa, whose relationship with neoliberalism may differ. Firstly, this could be different generations and age-cohorts of women, whose experiences of apartheid and the transitional period might have affected their relationship with the ideas of struggle, hard work and working-class identity. As I show in the thesis, the students' construction of the FPE was shaped by their observations of older women in positions of power, their youth identity as a marker of distinction, as well as their socialisation amongst older generations and experiencing the legacy of apartheid, which, to paraphrase Sara Ahmed (2014), keeps the memory of the wound raw. Therefore, similar observations and life experiences might have different interpretive meanings for women who are members of the same generation as the current political elites. Secondly, the research could be replicated at other South African universities in order to observe the impact of the elite/working class image and reputation of different institutions. UJ students have particular perceptions of themselves due to their university choices and experience. Therefore, the variations in setting between so-called elite, research universities in comparison to comprehensive universities and under-resourced formerly Black African institutions should be explored. Lastly, it would be equally insightful to focus on young people who are the so-called NEETS, and who have been the worst affected by the neoliberal policies of the ANC governments. NEETS might have diminished ability and desire to identify with ideas of being change-makers as I argued is the case with university students and which makes them into exceptional individuals in the

South African context. These comparative approaches against the findings of this thesis would further enlighten the effects of eliteness of women in politics in the RME mechanism.

My research further suggests that there might be other terms and concepts which might be less contested and more appropriate for the examination of the RME. These concepts should be rooted in a particular spatial-temporal setting and capture what the ideal of women in positions of power should be. The popularity and importance of the idea of Black excellence amongst Black African youth and activists in South Africa suggests that this notion could offer an alternative signifier or provide a conceptual anchor for debates that would reveal a concept, which would enable the RME based empowerment process. Consequently, future feminist activism and research might analyse the discourses and concepts that impact young women's ability to perceive themselves as exceptional, without being deemed deviant and that would enable them to find the language that would challenge the norms underpinning the patriarchal structures. Methodologically, this would best be explored in languages that are most relevant to the participants and consequently explore whether there are similarities across ethno-linguistic groups, which would enable intersectional solidarities for future advocacy and empowering of women across various backgrounds.

Lastly, feminist activists and researchers may consider more closely the issue of access to detailed information about women's personal and professional life. To date, advocacy and research on the issue of information and women's presence in politics has primarily been operationalised in the realm of politicians' communication skills, strategies and citizen outreach (Piscopo, 2018). My research suggests that it would be beneficial for female students in South Africa and potentially other women as well, if women in politics tried more deliberately to define and portray themselves as *leaders* and used the discursive link of elite-leadership in order to help young women to think about themselves as relevant, adequate and capable political beings. Leadership can thus serve as a tool of

‘intersectional solidarity’ (Emejulu, 2018; Seppälä, 2016) building that creates bridges across inter- and intra- generational divides.

However, such activities are contingent on people’s analytical skills and their abilities to interpret this information from political elite-leaders, in order to compare women in power against their own lived realities. Citizens would thus profit from being better equipped to examine the systems and structures that shape their everyday experiences in order to understand the existing solidarities with women in power. Feminist activism and research in politics would therefore benefit from seeing the education realm as its natural sphere of engagement, rather than a different, siloed sphere. The potential for changing social norms and politics is intrinsically tied to skills that educational institutions, and universities in particular, should seek to develop (Stromquist, 2003). These competencies could help women to be more effective in utilising women in politics as an empowerment resource. Hence, this study substantiates the existing calls for reforms of the HE sector in South Africa, in order to achieve its anticipated mandate of strengthening the non-racial, non-sexist society and preserving the democratic nature of the country. I concur with the words of Roger Southall who, borrowing from Pierre Bourdieu, suggests that the South African education system “channels students towards unquestioning acceptance of the established social system, as part of the natural order of things. In short, ...its hidden purpose is to reproduce the values of the dominant class” (2016, 123).

While this thesis enhances our understanding of the normative power underpinning the social order in South Africa, it is ultimately motivated by the feminist desire to contribute to women’s empowerment, which I understand as a political project for human equality and social justice. The imperative to continue such feminist research is substantiated by the reversal of some of the gains in equality and justice achieved in the past, as well as the slow pace of change on other fronts (Rai, 2008). This backsliding and stagnation are in some ways observable in South Africa, as I show throughout the thesis. However, they are also accompanied by the austerity-induced squeeze on resources available to

feminist activists and academics in other parts of the world, hitting both programming and research (Celis and Lovenduski, 2018; Emejulu, 2018; Gutiérrez Rodríguez, Tuzcu and Winkel, 2018; Grzebalska, Kovats and Peto, 2017). They are supplemented by patriarchal co-optation of some of the tools at the disposal of feminist advocacy, not least women's empowerment itself, and by misogynistic attacks emboldened by left- and right-wing populisms (McFadden, 2018). Distilling theoretical and conceptual lessons, and considering how they can travel across contexts, is one of the ways the thesis aligns with feminist academic ambitions. In this way, it may support the ongoing, decades-long efforts of feminist practitioners on the continent (Tripp, 2017) and around the world to change the social order.

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Appendix

Short Biographies of Select Student Participants

Several students are featured multiple times in the thesis. As their biographical information is only included at their first mention, the reader can find below excerpts from the main text that provide the students' background stories. These biographies are therefore meant to help the reader be reminded who the students are as they encounter them on the different pages of the thesis, which are included by their names. As is the case in the main text, the biographies below use the terminology and identifications preferred by the students themselves.

Aria (pages 53, 210 and 234)

Aria portrayed herself as someone who could be described in South Africa as a 'non-racialist,' because although she thought race had an impact on people's lives, especially with regards to accessing economic resources, she claimed she did not let race influence her interactions and views of other people. She defined herself as African and said she did not like it when people asked her about her ethnicity. She was from Mpumalanga, but she had moved to Gauteng where she went to a well-resourced high school, although it did not assist her with applying to university. She was an "aspiring plus size model", who felt bullied and judged in school, but had no one to talk to because her parents, who both worked in the public sector, travelled a lot. She was a poet, taking part in poetry groups and jam sessions, but was not a member of any societies or organisations.

Arya (pages 151, 152, 173, 242, 243 and 246)

Arya was a Black NSFAS- funded student from a township in Gauteng and a mother of a young girl. In 2017, she was in her second year of studies and lived with her parents, commuting a considerable distance to campus. She was a few years older than most of her peers, as she had done a learnership after matric, then started a different course, but abandoned it as she had her baby. She was therefore re-starting her studies, this time at UJ's APK, APK, where she also joined a volunteering community engagement society. As a young mother from a township, when she was pondering what her life would be like by the time she

was 31, she spoke about having saved money for the education of her child and her younger brother. She also wanted to take care of her parents before starting to care for herself.

Bucie (pages 93 and 243)

Bucie was a Black student from a township in Gauteng, but she clarified that she lived in its “middle class section.” She was a member and a team leader in an on-campus society and she came to UJ at the insistence of her family, as she had originally wanted to pursue investigative journalism and study at a college. However, she had been convinced by her family that she was smart enough to go to university, but that she should study a degree that was less dangerous. Bucie was one of those students who spoke about her desire for economic independence because she believed it would give her a voice and an ability to withstand pressures from those in power, namely her family’s elders. Bucie’s desire for independence did not mean that she wanted to care only about herself and her own success. She said that she was studying to get a good job that would allow her to pay for her nephew’s education, once he was ready to go to university. She also wanted to give her mother a beautiful house, just like the ones she saw on TV

Busisiwe (pages 226 and 227)

Busisiwe was a Black student from a small town in Mpumalanga. Like many other students, she grew up with her grandparents because her mother had to work and could not take care of her, and received what she described as Christian upbringing. She was from a township, but she said that her family always had food and electricity. Her mother used to work as a clerk, but was currently unemployed; however, thanks to a bursary that paid for her education, as well as accommodation, her studies were going well.

Danie (pages 224 and 225)

Danie’s story could be a poster representation of what the ANC envisioned for the Black African child in post-apartheid South Africa, because she was a Black young woman who came from rural Mpumalanga and received NSFAS funding to

study at UJ, where she did not participate in any organisations or societies. When she was younger, she had to walk eight kilometres to school and after a whole day of classes, she would have her household chores waiting for her at home. Despite what she called her conservative upbringing, she described herself as being different from the girls in her village and acting differently from the norm. She did not like to wear girly clothes and she played football with the boys.

Daniela (page 195)

Daniela was a white student in her second year of Biokinetics studies at the DFC campus. She lived with her parents and commuted to school by car, although she preferred to park at APK and take the university-funded bus to DFC as a safety precaution. As many other students, she was worried about driving in the CBD. Her mother paid her fees in her first year, and she was able to get a bursary for her second year, but she was also working while not being a member of clubs or societies. She had originally applied to Wits to study medicine, but she was told that she did not get into the country's leading programme because of racial quotas.

Emily (page 222)

Emily was a first-year student at UJ when we met at the end of 2016 and she came from a mixed white background – her father was Afrikaner and her mother British – and so she said she was brought up in between two cultures. When university courses were in session, Emily lived with relatives not too far from the campus, as she was from another part of Gauteng and did not want to commute the distance. She was able to afford her fees because of her mother's job, that she described as well paid. She was contemplating her future at UJ in favour of another university and was thus not actively engaged member of on campus organisations. She said that both of her cultural backgrounds were conservative, but she believed that Afrikaners were perceived to be more conservative than British in South Africa, especially because of the influence of the traditional Afrikaner NG Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church – NGK).

Lady T (pages 117 and 118)

Lady T was a Black student from a township in Gauteng and in 2017 in her second year, and she was not a member of any organisations on campus, nor did she participate in the protests, as she thought of UJ mostly as a place to study and pass her courses. She lived with her aunt, siblings and cousins, as her parents, who were teachers, had passed away a long time ago. Her family depended on social grants and living in a township far from campus meant that she had a stressful, long commute on public transport each day. Not many young people who lived around her went to varsity, nor did other members in her immediate family. She was hoping to continue studying after finishing her bachelor's degree, getting multiple doctorates and also working and being a mother at the same time, which she said she thought was doable, but would make her life very busy.

Laury (pages 206, 208, 209 and 221)

Laury was an African student whose well-educated father lived and worked in another country, because he was unable to get employed in South Africa as a non-citizen. She could see herself in Parliament and although she was not a member of a party, she engaged in campus societies. Laury struggled with university fees as a result of her family situation, and nearly did not return to UJ for her second year in 2017. Nonetheless, she admired her mother because she was hustling to provide for the family. Without a matric and in charge of three children, she had to get additional income for the household to ensure they get by and cooked traditional foods that she sold and had an informal tailoring business as well.

Joy (pages 94, 130 and 131)

Joy was from a township in the North-West province, and whom I interviewed in March 2017. She was born in a township in Gauteng, but her parents moved to North West, where they lived when we met. She was an NSFAS-funded student, and despite the fact that neither of her parents were formally employed, she felt their life struggles were easier than other people's because her mother made sure they did not go to bed hungry. She was engaged in student activism on campus, including a community outreach group, and she volunteered with a youth

organisation off campus as well. When we were discussing racial relations, she mentioned the pain and hurt she felt when she had heard the stories of what the older generations went through. However, she did not wish to identify with a specific race. She believed that although race still mattered in the country, citing examples of discrimination that she had experienced and witnessed, she believed that politics was supposed to be about ideologies.

Juliet (page 212)

Juliet an African student from rural parts of Mpumalanga. She lived with her sister and her grandmother, whom she spoke very fondly of, and whom she said she missed very much while at university. She lived in a small village, with no shops or other services. She believed that more Black Africans were becoming educated, which meant that apartheid could not possibly be repeated.

Katleho (pages 90 and 91)

came across as a strong feminist. In the debate, she called for more women in politics and for a fight against patriarchy. She found inspiration in many strong women, including Helen Zille. She was a DA supporter and believed Mmusi Maimane, the leader of the DA at the time, represented the interests of her generation and worked towards an equal South Africa. She was living in the suburbs, with parents, both of whom had some formal education and were employed. When I tried to reconnect with Katleho in January 2017, she told me that she was not coming back to UJ because she could no longer afford the fees. She eventually managed to resume her studies and when we met several weeks later, she explained how her family unexpectedly got into financial difficulties, which caused her concerns over studies. Not having expected such situation to arise, she had not applied for NSFAS or bursaries. In the end she came to an arrangement with UJ administration that allowed her to continue and having good marks qualified her for additional fee reduction. As she resumed her studies, she was making the best out of her UJ experience, becoming chairperson of a society and playing on a team, having felt that in her first year she had too much free time and that she could use it to enhance her career prospects.

Keitumetse (pages 139, 140 and 232)

Keitumetse was an African (black) law student from Gauteng, captured the difference between the kind of information a student would like to know about women in politics and the information that was available. She grew up in a township, but she was from a financially secure home. Although her father and mother were separated, he was helping to pay for Keitumetse's studies. She grew up with her mother, aunt and cousins, and women in her family were all educated, be it through a college or university. While at UJ, she joined a day house and was a community engagement volunteer, and she also worked off campus, especially in promotions. She said she did not believe in gender norms which made Black African women be submissive, and she said she definitely did not follow the stereotypes.

Kiara (pages 41, 174 and 175)

In February 2017, Kiara was in her second year and joined a community engagement group as a volunteer. She had her eyes set on becoming a brand manager for a fashion and beauty house, such as Coco Chanel. She was from a township in Gauteng and was very proud of being from a hip and happening location. Kiara lived with her mother, grandmother and her brother, and while her mother only had a matric, her sisters were advocates (higher-level legal counsellors), so her university career was not unprecedented in her family. She started her studies without funding, but by the second year she was able to get NSFAS and was preparing to move into on-campus residence.

Lebo (pages 87, 88 and 150)

Lebo became one of my closest interviewees, with whom I met on several occasions to talk about her efforts to run a youth empowerment NGO. She was a Black student from a township in Gauteng in her second year of studies in 2016. She worked extremely hard to set up an organisation that sought to help young people in her community with accessing education and getting skills to alleviate poverty. She was able to live in a residence on campus because of the bursary that she had received from the company, where her mother worked as an administrative help. Growing up in a household with many single women, she

was shown the value of independence and non-reliance on others, although she said she had also grown up in a culture in which men were seen as the leaders. Taking her own money, the little that she had, she got the organisation off the ground and was working tirelessly with a few friends to organise events and to raise further funds for programmes. She was also a member of some organisations at UJ, including a women's organisation, which, however, did not have much visibility on campus.

Lesego (pages 95, 96, 200 and 201)

Lesego, a Black (African) student, was from a township in Gauteng, but she lived in a student commune not far from the university. She described her financial situation as 'normal' and said that her mother was a hard worker, and so they never went hungry and had a roof over their heads. Her parents were both college-educated and public sector employees, but she was living just with her mother, and as Lesego proudly claimed, she was both a father and a mother to her. Although she was studying a degree related to politics, she was not active in any civic or political organisations.

Mbali (pages 122 and 232)

Mbali was from a township in Gauteng and from her perspective, she was from an average home as far as their economic situation was concerned. She said that although her family would not have bread every once in a while, or struggled to pay for electricity, her mother was able to provide for them. Mbali was the first one in her family to go to university and she was 100% set on becoming a diplomat. She did not doubt her chances to succeed. She portrayed herself as a diplomat in the making and most of her answers and views were shaped by this prospect. She stressed to me the importance of showing South Africa in a good light to the rest of the world, which made her very critical of the behaviour of the EFF MPs during the 2017 SONA debate in Parliament, when they disrupted the proceedings and badgered Jacob Zuma to show that they considered his Presidency illegitimate. Mbali hoped that in 10 years' time she would not be in South Africa, but that she would be an ambassador to the UN and travelling the world.

Mickey (pages 96, 97 and 232)

Mickey, who did not personally identify with a particular racial category, was in her second year in 2017 and came from a township in Gauteng and from financially stable home. Mickey's mother was a public sector employee and while at UJ she was not a member of any organisations, but was studying a community-orientated degree. She said that although her family was Zulu, she did not speak the language as fluently as she would like. Moreover, she described her parents' relationship as untraditional, because they both helped each other, instead of her father dominating. She spoke about her inability to cook when she moved to varsity and the reactions that she got from her fellow students, who she said had questioned how that was possible, because as she was Black woman.

Nomthandanzo (page 166)

Nomthandanzo was an African student living in a township in Gauteng. At 19, she was living with her parents and brothers, and was a mother to a baby boy. She was studying to become a community worker, hoping to help others in the future. When she was describing her living situation, she said she felt privileged because unlike many other people living in townships, she had never gone hungry, because her mother had always made sure that she and her brothers were fed, and that they even had cake to celebrate big achievements.

Nonkululeko (pages 179, 180 and 242)

Nonkululeko was a Black master's student from a township in Gauteng and a close friend, articulated the tensions around class identification of university students in an insightful way. She and I would get into frequent arguments about what was important in life and what made someone successful. As she explained, for someone like her, who had lost her mother at a young age and grew up with a father who did not put food on the table nor had given her money to buy bread, emotional satisfaction came secondary to financial stability when thinking about her future. These thoughts would even lead her to conclude that maybe pursuing a master's degree had not been the best choice for her, because her friends in the townships who were no longer studying but working, were able to buy cars,

while she still struggled to make ends meet, working several student jobs and fighting to get scholarships.

Nos (page 158)

Nos, an African student from a township in Gauteng, was in her second year when she attended one of the group discussions. She was a bursary recipient and she was not a member of any organisations on or off campus. Nos was living with her cousin, as her mother passed away when she was still a teenager and her father did not live with them. She liked living in a township because it was an exciting space, yet she did not have indoor sanitation, which was very common for many township housing units, and she highlighted how people living in other parts of town do not realise how different life in a township was.

Phillipine (pages 131, 193 and 194)

Phillipine believed that as a Black African woman she was at an advantage and that Black African women were being valued in the post-apartheid era. It was a seemingly contradictory position to her earlier statements during our interview, when she had said that as a girl she had felt discriminated against at home. Growing up in a village in Limpopo, she was determined to come to university, having seen the situation in her rural area, and being convinced the only way for a better life was through education. At UJ she was not active in organisations or political parties, and she was able to study at UJ only because she received NSFAS funding, although it was not sufficient to ensure that she always had enough money for food. Growing up, she said she had been expected to do all the typical girl duties, from serving food to the men to doing the dishes, which made her feel unequal. However, when I asked her whether she felt limited in her career options as a Black African woman, she said that everyone was given equal opportunities now, unlike maybe ten years ago, and if she was not given a job, she would use her race and gender to fight the potential discrimination.

Sage Marley (pages 41, 92 and 93)

Sage Marley considered herself racially mixed (not Coloured), having a white father and a Black African mother, while often being racialised as white. Sage

Marley was from Gauteng, and her journey into varsity was a complicated one. It included armed home invasion, which affected her ability to write final exams in grade 12 and to obtain matric to commence her university studies. Although she was not member of any organisations, she has always shown interest in art that she wanted to incorporate into her future career. She went to a high school that she described as small, conservative Christian and racially mixed. She was adamant about the impact that an early exposure to apartheid history had on kids in schools. She thought that young kids find friends across racial groups, but they start drawing lines amongst themselves the more they get exposed to the narratives and histories of apartheid. This led her to the conclusion that the apartheid history should not be such a dominating element in early schooling, but something that cannot be forgotten nonetheless.

Sanele (pages 232, 241 and 242)

Sanele did not have a bursary or a job when we met during her first year at UJ in 2016, nor was she participating in organisations on or off campus. She lived in a township, but she moved there after having lived for several years in one of the richest neighbourhoods in Gauteng. Her parents were both medical professionals, while her mother had already retired, her father still worked in the public sector. She lived with her parents and commuted to the university, but as she explained, she was happy to live at home and benefit from the care and support of her family, while her parents were trying to “push her out” to become more independent. Looking back at her move from suburbia, she was happy with the move to a township. Yet at the same time, she was critical of many people who lived around her – young people in her community with whom she was not friends.

Sat-Ra Nthabi (pages 137, 141, 191, 192 and 224)

Sat-Ra Nthabi was a Black student who grew up in a township in Gauteng and came to varsity after having worked for several years in administrative jobs, which she had realised would never allow her to progress professionally. Hence, she was older than most of my other participants and one of a few students who were mothers. Despite the advice of her family that being a single mother she

should not leave the safety and stability of her job, she had done just that in order to pursue a degree. She was very active and engaged in student activities, including holding a leadership position in a Black students' organisation and led a community-based NGO outside of the university.

Sinqobile (pages 71, 203 and 234)

Sinqobile was a Black student who lived at home with her mother, who was a cleaner. She was a pro-active go-getter from a township in Gauteng: she was involved in various on-campus activities and as she explained, although she did not know much about politics, she hoped there might be something that came out of her participation in the research, because she believed that one never knew what doors such engagement could open. She was convinced that in order to succeed and to get ahead in South Africa, she had to be active, knock on doors and ask for things. For example, she had gone to the ANC offices to ask for money for her studies, which she never received despite having been promised by a member of the local branch. Moreover, she believed that the ANC government only pretended to push for women's empowerment and paid lip service to women's equality.

Sharon (pages 197 and 242)

Black African student, Sharon was living with her mother in a township in Gauteng, it seemed to me that she was downplaying what I perceived as serious problems, such as debt-collectors knocking on their door, asking for money to settle her outstanding bill for a semester that she took at UNISA. That was her first attempt to start university studies, which, however, fell through because the money she had been promised by allegedly politically connected individuals did not materialise. She saw her mother as a superwoman – with no education or jobs, her mother pulled Sharon and her brother through, after her father passed away when she was seven.

Taneeka (pages 121, 122 and 125)

Taneeka's mother was a housewife with a high school certificate, and her father was the sole provider in the household, working in accounting and finance. They

lived in an Indian/Asian township in Gauteng, and although she needed a bursary to study, she did not describe their circumstances as being poor. After high school, she did not know what she wanted to do so she spent two years after matric working. She took the only job she was offered, which was in her uncle's accounting company. Having enjoyed her experience and thinking that the pay was decent, she had saved some money and started her diploma course. Taneeka's future goals included having her own accounting firm, and "being an awesome boss," while at the same time being a mother and running a household – time-demanding responsibilities that she believed were achievable.

Thando (pages 53, 54, 56 and 57)

Thando was an African young woman from KZN, whose family was closely tied to the ruling ANC, as her parents worked in the public sector. Yet Thando herself was not actively involved in political parties or student organisations at UJ. She believed that African culture, especially customs and traditions such as slaughtering or black magic, had been forgotten and devalued under the influence of colonial Christian conversion. During our interview, some of her answers made me suspect that the racial difference between us mattered to her, so at the end of the conversation I directly asked her whether she would have said things differently had I been Black African. Her response caught me off guard, because we had met twice before – once in her FGD and another time for an informal hang-out with her and her friend just before Christmas 2016. Back then we spoke about our families, holiday traditions and I thought it was very clear that I was a foreigner, with very different customs, worldviews and personal histories from most white South Africans. Nonetheless, she admitted that she censored herself, that she expressed things differently, because she did not know whether I would get offended as a white person, and a white Christian more specifically.

Thato (pages 245 and 246)

Thato was a student from a township in Gauteng, who was studying in order to be able to get a job as a community worker. She was a member of a volunteering society for community engagement, and she even joined a student political

organisation, which she explained however, as a practical choice, rather than a reflection of her political commitments and values. She was the first one in her family to go to university and she had to take a gap year after matriculating, because she did not have enough money to pay for her studies at the time. As she wanted to help other people, it was important for her to see women in politics help other women and she believed that FPEs as leaders had to inspire others – being inspirational, empowering and encouraging were qualities that she, as many others, expected of an ideal FPE.

Thobile (pages 194, 195 and 221)

Thobile was an African student from Mpumalanga, but she lived not too far from the university in a student commune. She was able to finance her first year of studies through instalments with the assistance of her father who encouraged her to get educated and go to university, when she had been hesitant during her high school years. For her second year, she was waiting for NSFAS funding to come through when we met, as late as in March 2017, nearly month and a half into the first semester. During her time at UJ, she was pursuing a degree that was connected to politics, and after struggling to adjust to the workload in the first year, she was coping well, although she was not spending time in organisations or societies.

Tshiamo (pages 123 – 124, and 168)

Tshiamo found herself studying a degree in Politics after a few years of trying to get into varsity for a Law degree. Unexpectedly, she ended up coming to UJ despite getting into a law programme at another institution, because she had fallen in love with the university which she said became more important to her than her love for law. Yet, she did not give up on law completely, because she was still considering pursuing it after finishing her current degree. Tshiamo was an African student from the Free State, who described her neighbourhood as middle class with pockets of poverty. Her father worked for the government and her mother was a teacher, which allowed her to go to a well-funded high school and even take some college courses before enrolling in university. While at UJ, she was not a member of an organisation or a society. She was not sure what she

could do with her degree in Politics, especially because she was uncertain if she was passionate enough about it, although she enjoyed the modules she was taking.

Zanele (page 239)

Zanele's had decided to come to UJ from KZN to get away from her family, gain independence and to study a degree that her mother disapproved of. She considered her mother to be an elite, having managed to provide a good life for Zanele and her siblings without her husband, Zanele's father, who had passed away when she was a child. While still in her first year of university, Zanele said she took on a role of a lay preacher in her res. She said she was in favour of women taking leadership positions, but not in an equal measure as men, because of their emotions. The most important leadership positions should, according to her, be taken by men.

Focus Group Discussions Schedule and Questions

Introductions:

- Introduce myself and research objectives: Students' perceptions of FPEs and the current political situation more broadly
 - Explain why participants were selected (age/gender/ first – second year)
 - Explain their inputs and contributions towards the project overall (interviews next year)
 - Give opportunity to ask questions about the research

Consent:

- Circulate/ Give each participant the consent form (circulated previously via email to all as they signed up) and go through the document, especially explain:
 - Recording – data storage (Password protected; might be archived)
 - Confidentiality
 - need to commit to confidentiality amongst the group members in order to create a safe space conducive to open discussions;
 - give them a warning about what they say, that they might have shared friends and acquaintances without them knowing it
 - Pseudonyms (refer to info sheet) and sharing of findings,
 - Personal details, which could lead to their identification, will be carefully considered and removed as necessary because the research findings will be shared with all the participants and are also expected to be published for academic consumption in South Africa
 - Voluntary participation - don't have to answer, can leave and can withdraw until Sept 2017
- No benefits for the lectures/ classes; no reporting to teachers; etc.
- Give opportunity to ask questions
- At the end: ask them to cross out in form and sign – collect the forms;

Other Practicalities

- Circulate information sheet: fully voluntary and will not impact on the students' participation in the FGD.
- Ground rules: Respect
- Me taking notes – not to be disturbed, nothing wrong etc.

Quick Break

Participants introduce themselves: Share name and interesting fact

Discussion

- Icebreaker: Spend a few minutes talking about Fees Must Fall and about talking politics – ask them to share past experiences, check if any anxieties about talking about politics
- Who do you think is an FPE?

- Examples/ names – why?
- What makes an FPE?
- What kind of characteristics do they have?
- How do they act? How do they behave?
- What do they do in politics? What makes them political?
- If specific people are not being mentioned, ask about specific individuals:
 - From Political parties:
 - Bathabile Dlamini; Baleka Mbete; Dlamini Zuma; (ANC WL); Thoko Didiza
 - Hellen Zille; Lindiwe Mazibuko; Patricia de Lille; Pumzila van Damme (DA)
 - Hlengiwe Makhosini, Magdelene Moonsamy (EFF)
 - Other public officials: Thuli Madonsela (PP); Jiba (NPA); Phiyega (Police)
 - Media: Ranjany Munusamy (DM); Marianne Thamm (DM); Khadija Patel (Daily Vox); Iman Rapetti (eNCA); Nontobeko Sibisi (enca doek); Pontsho Pilane (M&G)
 - NGOs/ Civil Society: Koketso Moeti (Amandla Mobi);
 - Economic Figures: Lynette Ntuli (CEO Investment Solutions); Wendy Ackerman (Pick n Pay); Irene Charnley (MTN); Judy Dlamini (Pharmacare)
 - Traditional Leaders (Balobedu Rain Queen: Modjadji) Noluntu Dalindyebo (baThembu king Buyelekhaya's wife); VaVhenda (Masindi fighting to be first queen)
 - Student political leaders: Simamkele Dlakavu (EFF – Remember Khwezi); Shaeera Kalla (Wits SRC – FMF); Nompandolo (Ulo) Mkhathshwa (Wits SRC – FMF); SA Union of Students' Fasiha Hassan (WITS SRC Secretary)
 - Apartheid Figures: Winnie Mandela, Helen Joseph; Mamphela Ramphele; Albertina Sisulu, Ruth First, Graca Machel;
 - Other: Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka (UN Women/ former ANC Mbeki)
- How are they treated?
 - What do other people think about FPEs?
 - Are they different from male politicians?
 - Do they pursue specific policies?
 - Do FPEs protest or do they only act in official politics?
 - Can women be successful in politics?
 - What do other politicians say about women?
 - Are women treated differently? are they disempowered?
 - Use an example of a recent event or an issue, which will be dominating the news of the time in which FPEs feature
 - Baleka Mbete's wedding and Birthday
 - Winnie Mandela's Birthday – mother of the nation
- How would they act in a certain situation or in contrast, how would the participants handle a situation differently from the political elite being discussed

- Can you imagine being an FPE?
 - Are FPE someone like you?
 - Race, class, location/ethnicity, religion, et.
 - Motherhood/ femininity
 - Modernity (connected to age)
- University students as the new elites – do you agree?
- Would like/ want to be like the FPEs?
 - Achieve their success? Take their paths? Would you want to work in such environment (politics/patriarchy)?

Conclusions:

- Questions
- Feedback form, as they fill out:
- Reiterate the future processes, including the further selection of participants for the second stage of interviews in new year and that I will be reconnecting with most of them in January 2017.
- Encourage them to get in touch to meet with me separately to provide comments and feedback through email.
 - All my contact details are on the consent form; encourage them to keep the copy of the form
 - Encourage them to stay in touch for any other concerns they might want to discuss (e.g. doing research, future studies, etc.)

Interview Schedule and Questions

Introduction

- Re-introduce the research and myself
 - Name, SOAS- Centre for Gender studies; Second year PhD etc.
 - The research objectives: Student lives and perceptions of female political elites
 - The reasons for the selection in the second phase, explain their inputs and contributions towards the larger research objective, Age – under 35 youth; 1st/2nd year – continued next academic year; South African

Review Consent

- Recording – data storage (Password protected; might be archived)
- Confidentiality through pseudonyms and sharing of findings,
 - Confirm continued use of pseudonym/name
 - Personal details, which could lead to their identification, will be carefully considered and removed as necessary because the research findings will be shared with all the participants and are also expected to be published for academic consumption in South Africa
- Voluntary- don't have to answer, can leave and can withdraw until Sept 2017
- No benefits for the lectures/ classes; no reporting to teachers; etc.
- Questions: Encourage them to ask throughout the interview as well!
- Sign the form

Interview:

- **Ice-Breakers**
 - How were the holidays? Where/ what did you do?
 - How did the end of last year go for you?
 - What did you think about the group discussion?
- **Tell me about yourself** (check data from personal forms)
 - What do you study? Do you do any activities? How do you find studies at UJ?
 - Home information – where are you from; religion/ socio-economic/ race; marital status and children
- **Journey of getting into university**
 - Was it difficult getting into university?
 - How was the decision made?
 - Who were the main people in that decision-making process?
 - What did you think about when you were making the decision?
- **Other decisions / situations**
 - What were some of the decisions in your life?
 - How do you feel about this decision?
 - Would you change it?
 - How? What is stopping you?
- **Other women in decision making**
 - Do you draw inspirations from other women?
 - Would these women make the decisions differently?
- **FPEs**
 - What makes an FPE?

- What kind of characteristics do they have?
- How do they act? How do they behave?
- What do they do in politics? What makes them political?
- How are they treated?
- What do other people think about FPEs?
- Are they different from male politicians?
- Do they pursue specific policies?
- Do FPEs protest or do they only act in official politics?
- Can women be successful in politics?
- What do other politicians say about women?
- Are women treated differently? Are they disempowered?
- Use an example of a recent event or an issue, which will be dominating the news of the time in which FPEs feature
 - Nkosazana Zuma as new ANC successor vs. Baleka Mbete
 - Hillary Clinton not getting the presidency
 - Bathabile Dlamini –Social Development
 - Thuli Madonsela and new PP – track record since FGD
- Can you imagine being an FPE
 - Are FPE someone like you? explore issues of race, class, location/ethnicity, religion, et. Motherhood/ femininity' Modernity (connected to age)
- University students as the new elites – do you agree?
 - What did you think about the FMF last year?
 - What do you expect this year?
- Would like or want to be like the FPEs? Achieve their success? Take their paths? Would want to work in such environment (politics/patriarchy)?
- Are there any FPEs that you find inspirational?
- Representation
 - Can FPEs who are not like you, represent you? Religion/ Class/ Race/ Gender

● **Future:**

- What would you like to do? Achieve?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- What do you have to do to get there?
- What decisions are you expecting to make to get there?
- Planning in South Africa – is it possible to have a plan/ vision for your life?

Conclusions:

- Ask if there are any questions / comments
- Reiterate the future processes,
 - Potential another interview, but in general this is it
 - Stay in touch for any other concerns they might want to discuss (e.g. doing research, future studies, etc.)
 - Let me know if want to engage, review transcript, etc.